



P A S E  PARTNERSHIP FOR AFTER SCHOOL EDUCATION

Partnering for Success The Role of Afterschool in College Persistence

December 2015

Letter from PASE Executive Director

Dear Colleagues:

It is with pleasure that the Partnership for After School Education (PASE) presents **Partnering for Success: The Role of Afterschool in College Persistence**. PASE has long been committed to supporting afterschool programs in preparing young people for college. It is abundantly clear that access to college can no longer be the only goal for our young people; it is a national imperative that young people, regardless of background or family income, not only have access to college but are also able to be successful in and graduate from these institutions. There are substantive and critical roles afterschool does and can play in supporting young people so they are prepared to persist in and graduate from college. Afterschool programs can have an enormous impact on the developmental, emotional and educational growth of young people. These programs often supplement, remediate and enrich school-day learning while providing additional support critical to children's healthy development. Afterschool, as an institution, can provide unique community support and skill development that can help young people transform their college aspirations and experiences into success.

PASE's work in college prep and success has helped to emphasize the importance of college preparedness in afterschool programs from a 6th through 16th grade perspective, starting early to ready young people for admission into college and providing them with the skills and supports they need to persevere once there. The majority of young people in the 1,600 afterschool programs in the PASE network will likely be the first generation in their families to attend college, are historically underrepresented students, and/or are students from low-income families and communities – all at disproportionate risk of not completing college.

PASE hopes that **Partnering for Success: The Role of Afterschool in College Persistence** will illuminate the connection between the skills and resources developed in high quality afterschool programs and a young person's ability to persist in college. By understanding the multifaceted ways that afterschool programs support and strengthen a young person's development, we hope to further collaborations between afterschool professionals and high school college guidance counselors. By recognizing our mutual goals for student success on campus and in life, we hope to build the foundation for more and stronger partnerships between institutions of higher education and community-based youth-serving organizations. There is a real opportunity for partnerships to go beyond the Admissions Office and to support students through to successful college completion.

We hope our work will contribute to the on-going conversations on college success, will help build resources available to support high quality programs and partnerships, and will connect the caring adults in children's lives across sectors for the shared benefit of our youth.

With warm wishes for great outcomes for all young people –

Alison Overseth, PASE Executive Director

Contents

Introduction	6
Definition of Terms	7
The Challenge of College Persistence	8
The Importance of Afterschool	11
Factors That Support Persistence.	14
Academic Preparation and Performance	14
Social and Emotional Skills Development (Non-cognitive Skills)	14
College Knowledge and Advising	14
Stages of the Student’s Life	15
Middle School and High School Years: Effective Practices	17
The Summer Before College: Promising Practices.	31
Life in College	36
Conclusion	41
Works Cited	42
About PASE.	43

Acknowledgments

PASE extends its gratitude to all the youth-serving programs who do transformative work in the lives of children. Our thanks, in particular, to those who contributed their experience, ideas, feedback, and the best and promising practices which are included in this publication. We appreciate all of the PASE college prep and success consultants, and our Higher Education Advisory Committee, who have worked with us over a number of years and whose expertise is an invaluable resource to PASE and the community-based organizations who provide college prep and success services. We thank the youth, community-based afterschool programs, colleges and universities, as well as our 2012–2015 Summer Teaching Fellows, who participated in our focus groups, interviews, surveys, and literature reviews. We also thank Dr. Edward Fergus, PASE Board Member and Assistant Professor in Educational Leadership, New York University for his guidance and support throughout this project, and to Esa Syeed and Caroline Sowers for their writing and research.

We offer special thanks to the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, who generously supports PASE's College Prep and Success Initiative.



Introduction

Introduction

The failure to complete college is the result of a confluence of factors. Young people from low-income, historically underrepresented backgrounds, or who are the first generation in their family to attend college, disproportionately lack access to the critical supports and services that help prepare them for college success. They often do not receive sufficient information and encouragement to strive for an education beyond high school and may have misperceptions about the cost of higher education and the steps required to prepare for it. Young people need to be engaged early to build their awareness of college, and they need support in the steps necessary to gain admission to, thrive in, and graduate from college.

PASE began exploring this topic to determine whether there is a role for afterschool programs to support college persistence. We know from a decade of experience that afterschool programs can provide vital supports in preparing students to gain admission to college. In addition to drawing from the qualitative data gathered from our experiences offering college prep and success capacity building services over the last four years, we specifically: conducted a literature scan and review; held focus groups and strategic discussions; conducted interviews of college students, community-based organizations, and higher education institutions; gathered survey data; and held forums to discuss and share best and promising practices in college persistence. Our strong confirmed conclusion is that, yes, there is a role for afterschool programs to support college persistence.

Community-based afterschool programs play a crucial role in helping youth build the skills necessary for academic success, healthy social and emotional development, and navigating the college process from their earliest educational experiences through graduation. We have learned that the persistence-related programming that currently exists within higher education often closely matches the positive youth development models employed in afterschool programs which emphasize leadership, empowerment, resilience and self-advocacy. Essentially, afterschool programs are critical in supporting young people to access, thrive in, and succeed in college.

In this report, PASE highlights what some afterschool programs are already doing to support college persistence. We share aspirational examples that demonstrate that it is not enough to say our youth “got in” to college, but that the goals should include matriculation and graduation. We believe that starting early and continuing support throughout college will help students persevere and overcome obstacles to graduation. While this report focuses on young people who apply to, are accepted to, and attend four-year residential colleges, we recognize that persistence challenges are even greater for part time students, those who commute daily to school, and those who are working towards achieving an Associate degree.

In order to be successful in this work and build upon the best and promising practices highlighted in this report, afterschool providers need qualified, trained staff, as well as effective partnerships and collaborations with public schools and higher education institutions, and expanded funding and resources. This report serves as a call to action for all stakeholders to think more strategically about the ways we can leverage existing resources, empower those who are currently engaged in college persistence work, and ignite further collaboration in order to fully engage afterschool programs with other stakeholders in our collective efforts to substantially impact a student’s success.

Definition of Terms

Academic Preparation and Performance: The intensity and rigor of a student’s high school curriculum and the student’s ability to access enrichment activities to support academic success.

Afterschool: Enrichment and informal education programs that serve youth from 5–21 years old in schools or at community centers, before school or after, during school breaks or summers.

College Knowledge: The ability to navigate the processes associated with researching options, applying, matriculating and attending college.

College Matching:

Best Fit: Students applying to, and enrolling in schools that have criteria that work best for them (e.g. size of school, location, diversity, affordability, academic program/focus, supports offered).

Under Matching: High academic performers applying to and enrolling in less selective institutions instead of more competitive schools.

College Persistence: The various dispositions, skills, and behaviors that allow college students to successfully pursue a degree to completion (Adelman, 2006).

Community-based Organization (CBO): Nonprofit, non-governmental or faith based groups that exist to strengthen the lives of community residents. CBOs are often the providers of high quality afterschool programs in underserved neighborhoods.

Financial Literacy: Understanding of the financial implications of higher education on a student’s life after graduation, including skills and knowledge needed to: navigate the financial aid process, create financial plans for the length of the college years, and understand the long-term financial consequences of critical decisions.

Social and Emotional Skills: The ability to “understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”¹ Also referred to as “non-cognitive skills.”

Summer Melt: A phenomenon after high school graduation in which students who intended to go to college do not enroll in the fall.²

1 Cooperative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. <http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/>

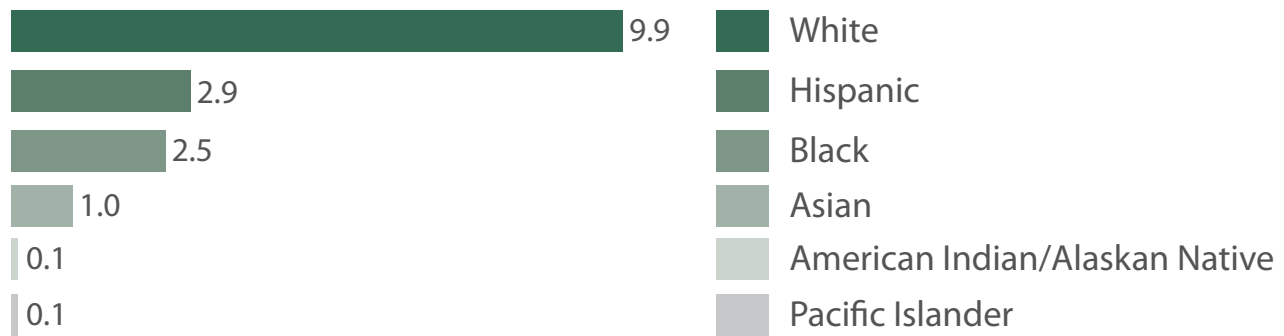
2 Castleman, B. L., Page, L. C., & Snowdon, A. L. (2013). SDP Summer Melt Handbook: A Guide to Investigating and Responding to Summer Melt. Retrieved from Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University: <http://sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/files/cepr-sdp/files/sdp-summer-melt-handbook.pdf>

The Challenge of College Persistence

There is a significant discrepancy between college enrollment and attainment of post-secondary degrees in the United States today between low-income, historically underrepresented and/or first generation young people as compared to students from other racial, ethnic or income groups.

Low-income youth enroll in college at lower rates than their middle- and upper-income peers. Only 50% of low-income youth, compared to 60% middle-income and 77% high-income youth, enroll in college.³ Also, historically underrepresented ethnic and racial groups **combined** have lower enrollment rates than their White counterparts.

2013 Undergraduate Enrollment: 17.5 Million Total⁴ By Race (According to Census Category):



The consequences of not completing college are dramatic. The unemployment rate of high school graduates is twice that of those who graduate from college.⁵ There has also been a rise in employers seeking candidates with bachelor's degrees – even for positions that historically did not require them. As a result, young people need to be prepared for future jobs and careers that require college degrees.

In addition to high unemployment, young people in the workforce who do not graduate from college earn 65% less than college graduates and are not as likely to have retirement benefits and health insurance.⁶

Impact on Low-income, Historically Underrepresented, First Generation Youth

Low-income, historically underrepresented, and first generation students are particularly vulnerable to derailment from the

Just 1 in 10 people from low-income families have a bachelor's degree by age 25.

³ National Center for Education Statistics (2013). Retrieved from: <http://nces.ed.gov>

⁴ National Center for Education Statistics (2013). Retrieved from: <http://nces.ed.gov>

⁵ The Executive Office of the President (2014, January). *Increasing College Opportunity for Low-Income Students: Promising Models and a Call to Action*.

⁶ The Executive Office of the President (2014, January).

college success trajectory, and what may appear to be a relatively small obstacle can lead to a student dropping out. Moreover, “while half of all people from high-income families have a bachelor’s degree by age 25, just 1 in 10 people from low-income families do.”⁷

Many youth served by community-based organizations (CBOs) live in high poverty neighborhoods and attend poorly performing public schools. As a result, many low-income, historically underrepresented, and first generation students arrive at college lacking the academic preparation to be successful. For many, the academic gap proves insurmountable. While 92% of Black and 75% of Hispanic citizens between the ages of 25–29 have a high school diploma, only 22% and 15%, respectively, have received their Bachelor’s degree.⁸ Additionally, “less than one-quarter of first generation students overall earn their way to a bachelor’s degree, compared to 68 percent of their non-first-gen peers.”⁹

7 Bailey, M.J. and Dynarski, S. (2011). “Inequality in Postsecondary Attainment.” In Greg Duncan and Richard Murnane, eds., *Whither Opportunity: Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children’s Life Chances*, pp. 117-132. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

8 National Center for Education Statistics (2013). Retrieved from: <http://nces.ed.gov>

9 Opidee, I. (2015, March). Supporting first-gen college students: 24 ideas for guiding students through the social, academic, financial, and administrative challenges of college. *University Business Online*. Retrieved from: <http://www.universitybusiness.com/article/supporting-first-gen-college-students>

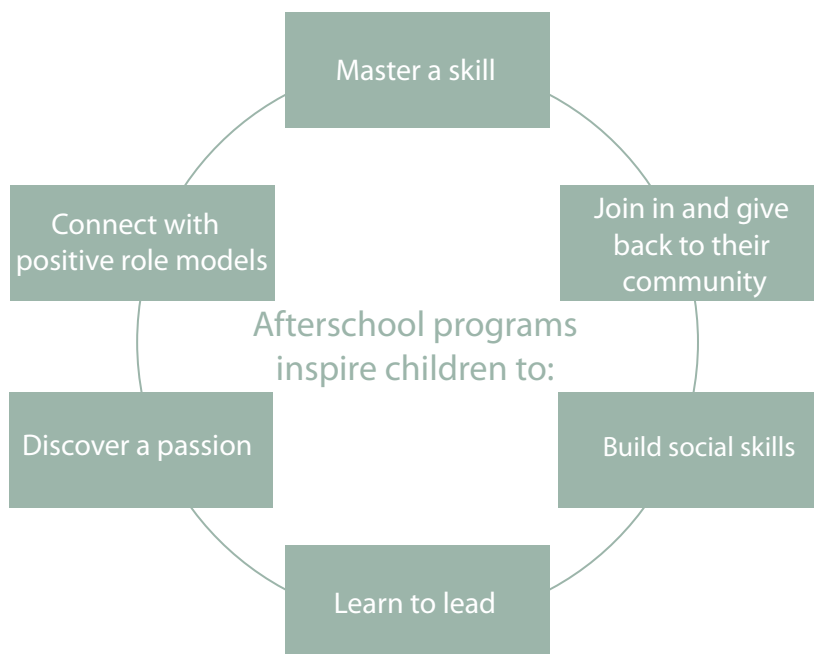


The Importance of Afterschool

The Importance of Afterschool

What is Afterschool

Afterschool programs support the development of young people’s values, mindsets, knowledge, and self-regulation, all of which contribute to young adult success.¹⁰ Whether serving youth in schools or at community centers, before school or after, during school breaks or summers – community-based afterschool programs engage and motivate young people while building their self-esteem, inspiring them with caring and supportive adult role models, and connecting them to their community. These programs are unique institutions that provide young people with opportunities to discover their passions, build their social skills, learn to lead, participate in stimulating activities, and join in and contribute to their communities. Effective afterschool programs are safe spaces with staff who know their youth, their parents, and their community, and provide young people with S.A.F.E. (Sequenced, Active, Focused, and Explicit)¹¹ experiences that develop their resilience by supporting healthy social and emotional development, and teach crucial 21st century skills.



10 Nagaoka, J. et al. (2015, June). Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework. University of Chicago Consortium of School Research, Concept Paper for Research and Practice. Retrieved from: <https://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Wallace%20Report.pdf> p. 4.

11 Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2007). The impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills. Chicago, IL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. Retrieved from: <http://www.casel.org/downloads/ASP-Full.pdf> p. 7.

Why Afterschool

For families everywhere, afterschool is not optional and out-of-school time learning is not a luxury. Throughout the United States, 21.1% of children under 18 live in poverty;¹² as a result, millions of families cannot afford access to many of the opportunities outside the school day that teach their children teamwork and creativity, develop their social skills, stimulate them academically, and support them in becoming responsible citizens. With the right engagement and encouragement, afterschool hours can fill those gaps and play a critical role in helping young people apply what they are learning in the classroom, practice their intellectual curiosity, and ultimately, thrive in school and life.

Over a decade of research has overwhelmingly demonstrated that effective afterschool programs have a profound, positive, and long-lasting impact on academic success, healthy development, and future achievement.¹³ The familiarity of afterschool program staff with the socioeconomic conditions and cultural backgrounds of the young people they serve, as well as the structural flexibility of the afterschool program, enables staff to focus on the specific needs of each young person or group of youth. Afterschool programs are also able to connect with parents and families, allowing them to engage in wide-ranging discussions, such as: the importance of supporting and encouraging their youth through the delayed gratification of earning a four-year degree; learning about the positive impacts of allowing girls to study away from home; or building understanding about how the young person will be in a better position to help his or her family once they have a college degree. While all children benefit from afterschool, it is essential that those living in poverty have equal access. Key findings on the importance of afterschool can be found on the Afterschool Alliance website www.afterschoolalliance.org.

Afterschool professionals “often articulate their larger role as helping young people develop an awareness of themselves and of the wide range of options before them, competencies to pursue those options, and the ability to make good future choices for their lives as engaged citizens in the world.”¹⁴

The research demonstrates the wide-ranging and significant benefits of afterschool programs, but also concludes that these benefits are directly correlated to program quality.¹⁵ In order to realize this potential, however, we must not only ensure that all youth have access to affordable afterschool programs, but also that these programs are high-quality and employ the effective practices that have proven results.¹⁶

12 U.S. Census Bureau (2015). Current Population Survey (CPS), 2015 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC). Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/>

13 Afterschool Alliance. (2014, October). America After 3pm: Afterschool Programs in Demand. Retrieved from: http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2014/AA3PM_Key_Findings.pdf

14 Nagaoka, J. et al. (2015, June). p. 13.

15 Durlak, J.A., & Weissberg, R.P. (2007).

16 Nagaoka, J. et al. (2015, June). p. 82.



Factors That Support Persistence

Factors That Support Persistence

The three most important factors supporting persistence that have emerged from the research are academic preparation, social and emotional (or non-cognitive) skills, and college knowledge.

Academic Preparation and Performance

College is fundamentally an academic experience that requires youth to know how to “do school”. The widely-cited U.S. Department of Education report, “The Toolkit Revisited,” notes that the intensity of a student’s high school curriculum, “still counts more than anything else in pre-collegiate history in providing momentum toward completing a bachelor’s degree.”¹⁷ This includes going beyond solely meeting high school graduation requirements by taking advanced placement courses, higher levels of math classes, and developing strong writing skills.

Social and Emotional Skills Development (Non-cognitive Skills)

In addition to being well-prepared academically, youth need strong non-cognitive skills that will help them to persist in college. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has defined social and emotional skills as the ability to “understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”¹⁸ Youth who have developed social and emotional skills have a strong sense of self, are resilient, can advocate for themselves, and overcome challenges.

College Knowledge and Advising

David Conley (2012) suggests that in order to be successful, students must possess knowledge and skills related to financial aid and matriculation systems, as well as skills that help them advocate for themselves within the institution and acquire the resources they need.¹⁹ This means finding the right match academically and applying to schools that offer the best fit socially and financially. This process involves poring over admissions criteria, evaluating a student’s academic interests and needs, and considering the total cost of attendance.

17 Adelman, C. (2006, February). “The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion from High School Through College.” U.S. Department of Education Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Retrieved from: <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/toolbox.pdf>.

18 Cooperative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. <http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/>

19 Conley, D. (2012). Deconstructing College Readiness. University of Washington Information School. Retrieved from: <http://projectinfolit.org/smart-talks/item/80-david-conley-deconstructing-college-readiness>

Stages of the Student's Life

Overview

Young people need to be engaged early to build their awareness of college, set expectations, and put them on track for higher education admission and success. At varying levels of intensity, afterschool programs foster college persistence skills across three stages of a student's academic life: 1) Middle School and High School; 2) The Summer Before College; and 3) Life in College. At each of these stages, afterschool programs take on different roles. With sufficient resources and effective collaborations, afterschool programs that want to do more, and have the resources to do more, can expand their impact in college prep and success programming in one or more of these stages.

Middle School and High School

While many afterschool programs instill the expectation of college attendance and completion from the earliest ages, college prep and success programs traditionally play a significant role in helping youth prepare for college when youth are in 6th–12th grade, offering the most intensive level of support. There are many examples of best practices with afterschool staff facilitating learning opportunities for middle and high schoolers to teach and reinforce college success skillsets, and to build or reinforce a college-going mindset.

The Summer Before College

Afterschool programs offer transitional supports as youth become rising college students and prepare to live independently. Much of the developing work done by afterschool programs during this phase is focused on ensuring youth make it on to campus and do not fall into the trap of Summer Melt. Programs may help to prepare accepted college students to map out campus resources, teach them how to manage their finances, teach them independent living skills, and guide them through completion of necessary paperwork during the summer.

Life in College

This is an emerging area of support for youth by afterschool providers who recognize the need for continued engagement as the youth they worked with so closely to access college are now navigating campus bureaucracies, academic and social challenges, and planning for summer employment.



Middle School and High School Years: Effective Practices

Middle School and High School Years: Effective Practices

The crux of afterschool programs' work to prepare students for college occurs in middle and high school. Afterschool programs create environments that empower students in their sense of self, and belief that they are intelligent students who can achieve strong grades, be accepted to competitive universities and be successful in college, and set the expectation for youth that they can and will graduate from college. These programs also work to ameliorate gaps in educational preparedness and educate youth and parents on the pathway to college access and success. These years of strengthening skillsets and building connected relationships with peers and adults in a college-going community of high expectations for youth, prepares the students for the application process and to thrive in college.²⁰

The following chart outlines, by grade, a sampling of effective practices to support middle and high schoolers as they prepare for college. The practices are outlined according to the factors that support persistence: Academic Preparation and Performance, Social and Emotional Skills, and College Knowledge and Advising. Following the chart are more detailed examples of best practices taking place in afterschool programs working with middle and high school youth, including how afterschool programs work with parents to build their college knowledge.

Visit PASE's website for additional resources on effective practices:

College Prep Milestones: A Guide for Afterschool Practitioners

www.pasesetter.org/resources#/college-prep-milestones-a-guide-for-afterschool-practitioners

College Prep Afterschool: A Practitioner's Guide to
Effective Programming for Middle and High School Youth

www.pasesetter.org/resources#/college-prep-afterschool-a-practitioners-guide-to-effective-programming

College Prep Programming Assessment Tool (CPPAT)

www.pasesetter.org/resources#/college-prep-programming-assessment-tool

20 (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Farrington, et al., 2012; Nagaoka, Farrington, Ehrlich, & Health, 2015)

	Academic Preparation and Performance	College Knowledge and Advising	Social and Emotional Skills Development
6 - 7th Grade	<p>Determine on what grade level youth is performing academically</p> <p>Identify academic supports either within school, CBO, or referral organization</p> <p>Understand and share high school admissions requirements</p> <p>Offer and/or encourage participation in preparatory classes for specialized high school entrance exams</p> <p>Provide project-based real world application of academic skills through enrichment offerings (throughout middle & high school)</p>	<p>Attend high school fairs and take youth on tours</p> <p>Visit local colleges for fun events such as sports or cultural performances</p> <p>Employ college-attending alumni as summer staff or mentors</p> <p>Ask youth to identify college role models – someone they know who is in college or a college graduate</p>	<p>Take youth on enriching field trips to develop cultural capital (throughout middle & high school)</p> <p>Practice traveling independently</p> <p>Develop schedule planners</p> <p>Ensure youth can tell time and manage lunch and snack money</p> <p>Focus on activities which develop self-esteem and foster confidence (throughout middle & high school)</p>
8th Grade	<p>Encourage youth to take algebra</p> <p>Encourage youth to attend any summer transition programs offered by the high school they will be attending</p>	<p>Encourage youth to adopt a college – learn about the school and share through banners</p> <p>Visit local colleges</p> <p>Interview current high school students on tips for successful transition to high school</p>	<p>Encourage enrichments and independent pursuits</p> <p>Increase opportunities for youth to choose enrichment activities</p> <p>Have youth participate in leadership activities such as youth councils or peer advisory programs</p> <p>Provide appropriate and factual information on sexual health and physical well-being</p>

	Academic Preparation and Performance	College Knowledge and Advising	Social and Emotional Skills Development
9th Grade	Establish a 4-year high school plan which aligns with general college admission requirements	Practice filling out easy applications such as for a contest or summer camp	Role play asking teachers and guidance counselors for help
	Identify academic supports in school (throughout high school)	Conduct virtual tours of colleges through websites	Encourage joining clubs, activities, and/or sports either through school or youth program to foster belonging
	Make connections with academic teachers so staff can understand academic requirements, provide support, and advocate for youth (throughout high school)	Continue to provide opportunities to visit colleges	Develop future life maps
	Identify additional academic supports within CBO or local college for youth requiring remediation or acceleration	Decorate office space where youth spend time with pennants of colleges attended by staff and alumni	Work intentionally with youth on executive function skills (time management, planning, organizing, switching focus)
	Provide quiet space for studying (throughout high school)	Maintain a bulletin board with college acceptances and photos from college visits of older youth in the program	Work with youth on understanding outcomes of choices and managing increased autonomy (throughout high school)
	Host study groups (throughout high school)		Host discussions on and share strategies for contending with setbacks

	Academic Preparation and Performance	College Knowledge and Advising	Social and Emotional Skills Development
10th - 11th Grade	Revisit and revise 4-year high school plan as needed	Provide youth with a large range of college options	Encourage youth to develop relationships with teachers who can write recommendations
	Offer Advanced Placement study groups for students interested in taking exams	Encourage participation in summer programs held on or in conjunction with college campuses	Create mentoring opportunities for youth to share knowledge of high school or an interest with middle school youth
	Provide opportunities for youth to be exposed to and practice college-level writing	Host and attend college fairs	Encourage international or national travel opportunities for exposure to different cultures and time away from home
	Offer SAT & other placement test prep sessions	Invite college attending former participants to meet with youth to discuss college life	Provide opportunities for youth to identify, develop, and lead service projects; host leadership retreats
	Ensure youth take PSAT	Employ college-age mentors to advise on the admissions process	Develop opportunities for youth to pursue career interests and research the educational requirements for different careers through career days, internships, and speakers
	Secure vouchers for SATs	Develop relationships with college admissions and other offices which work with low-income, historically underrepresented, and first generation youth	Help to identify summer jobs and internships
	Discuss connection between academic interests and potential careers	Take youth on overnight trips to colleges, sleep in a dorm, meet with students, sit in on classes, and speak with members of social organizations	Update resumes to highlight skills developed during summer jobs
		Offer workshops on the FAFSA application	Offer financial literacy sessions on budgeting, credit cards, and debt
		Discuss the full cost of college, e.g. travel, books, toiletries	Work with youth to clarify likes/dislikes as they relate to college choice – e.g. big vs. small, region, urban vs. suburban, roommates, social networks
		Host college spirit days where staff display or wear their college gear	

	Academic Preparation and Performance	College Knowledge and Advising	Social and Emotional Skills Development
12th Grade	<p>Have conversations with youth about their high school quality and grades in relation to college-bound youth from more competitive schools</p> <p>Encourage taking or retaking the SAT and other placement tests</p> <p>Remind youth that senior year grades still count toward admission</p>	<p>Help youth identify and speak to recent alumni of colleges they are interested in applying to</p> <p>Create a master application timeframe with deadlines (including FAFSA) for youth</p> <p>Offer workshops on understanding financial aid</p> <p>Host FAFSA completion sessions</p> <p>Call colleges on behalf of youth to advocate around acceptance, aid packages, and specialized programs</p> <p>Review and edit college application essays</p> <p>Review acceptance and financial aid offers to advise youth on best fit</p> <p>Role play phone calls to financial aid and admissions offices</p> <p>Encourage participation in admitted students' weekends</p>	<p>Host discussions on separation from home, race, class, privilege in society, and college. Share strategies for navigating these issues</p> <p>Celebrate the on-time submission of applications</p> <p>Celebrate on-time graduation from high school</p>

Academic Preparation and Performance

Graduating from Low Performing Public High Schools

Young people growing up in the most underserved neighborhoods are often attending the lowest performing public schools. As a result, students are not prepared well academically and may not have adults in their lives setting high expectations for their success. Students with high academic potential may get lost in the system due to lack of support. Even those who are academic

stars in their high schools may be woefully underprepared for the more demanding academics at the college level, and may have never been challenged to work at the level required for college success. These schools frequently do not offer Advanced Placement courses, foreign language options, or higher level math, all of which can be requirements for admission to more competitive colleges and are the type of courses which introduce the demands of college.

When students come from under-resourced and under-serviced high schools, they are less well-prepared than more affluent students. They are just as smart . . . but that first year is a huge learning curve. It is so steep.
—College Admissions Director

Afterschool programs cannot make up for the gaps in the public school system, however, many focus their efforts on preparing youth for the academic rigors of college. Starting in middle school, many afterschool programs encourage youth to study for and take specialized high school exams, which provide early exposure to the SAT/ACT test process, and continue providing encouragement and support through the taking of the SAT/ACT. Afterschool programs can also offer a variety of tutoring services and much-needed study groups, as well as innovative academic activities that respond to students' interests. These activities are often supportive of academic subjects, reinforcing school day learning through real world application. Afterschool programs can be the advocate for youth, informing students about what it means to graduate "college ready," including the types of classes they should take, the grades they need, and the scores they need to receive on their standardized exams. Afterschool staff have the time to get to know a student's academics interests and weaknesses and foster a supportive environment which identifies clear goals and benchmarks.

Writing Skills

Colleges and CBOs both have identified analytical writing skills as a particular challenge for students. Students often have not been in a situation where they have to construct an argument through writing, and feedback on writing is often focused on grammar and not the strength of ideas and argument. Additionally, youth are not provided the structured time and guided feedback required of the drafting and editing process which is critical to a strong final product.

For high school students, the notes are always on the board and they copy them down. Then they get to college and suddenly it's completely different. When the very first writing assignment asks them to think, not to spit something back, they don't even understand what they're being asked to do.
—Afterschool Program Staff

Many afterschool programs create writing opportunities that align with the standards of college writing. This process often begins by fostering the expectation among young people that if they work hard, they can say something meaningful, and then providing the structure and support for them to engage in drafts and revisions. Asking youth to engage in writing beyond what is required of school can be a challenge, but many programs have found success building off topical issues that are relevant to youth, sharing written pieces on the topic and having youth construct a written response. Additionally, some afterschool programs help to academically equip students by hosting overnight writing programs at colleges that allow students to develop college-level writing skills in classes with college professors.

Managing Time and the Workload

Students, colleges, and afterschool programs all recognize that academic performance in college also appears to be closely tied to students' ability to manage and meet new academic expectations. Even if they developed good homework habits in high school, many students still face a steep learning curve in college in terms of the new workload they must manage along with the increased autonomy in handling their time.

From offering a quiet homework setting and study groups to providing planning and project management opportunities, afterschool programs often work intentionally with youth on the critical skills of time management, planning and organization, and balancing a workload. When grades are impacted by youth not completing homework, or continually arriving late to school, afterschool staff can help them process what happened, and understand what to do differently the next time. Having developed positive relationships with youth, afterschool professionals can help youth realize the consequence of their choices, identify when they should seek support, and help them learn how to ask for help.

College and Career Connections

"Afterschool staff also help students better understand planning for present and future goals by creating connections between career interests and academic pathways."²¹

For many youth their exposure to a diversity of careers is limited and unrealistic, often informed more by media than fact. Afterschool staff can have frank discussions about a student's career interest, and his or her current academic performance and its implications for their academic and career trajectory. For example, a youth may express that he wants to become a doctor. Afterschool staff can share with youth

“ I didn’t know what it felt like to have so much homework at once. And just dealing with the autonomy...I didn’t know how to manage my time and I wasn’t taught time management because I didn’t have much to do in high school. —College Student

21 Halpern, R., Heckman, P., & Larson, R. (2013). Realizing the Potential of Learning in Middle Adolescence. Retrieved from: <http://www.howyouthlearn.org/pdf/Realizing%20the%20Poential%20of%20Learning%20in%20Middle%20Adolescence.pdf>

the kinds of courses, grades, and tests required to be a doctor. They can also discuss with youth the variety of careers that are associated with medicine. These conversations help to focus and guide a student so they are making informed educational choices.

Many organizations also attempt to widen their participants' knowledge base of careers so youth have more options as they envision future careers and understand the academic path required to enter these professions. Programs may also invite alumni who have graduated from college and embarked on a career to share their path and, in particular, how they overcame stumbling blocks.

Social and Emotional Skills Development

“Youth who participate in after-school programs improve significantly in three major areas: feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioral adjustment, and school performance. More specifically, after-school programs succeeded in improving youths’ feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem, school bonding (positive feelings and attitudes toward school), positive social behaviors, school grades and achievement test scores.”²²

There is a large body of research demonstrating that the development of social and emotional skills in young people contributes to a variety of positive outcomes in school, in their relationships with peers and adults, and in life. Having strong social and emotional skills are particularly important for helping youth persist in college. In a survey conducted by PASE, colleges and universities emphasized that students who are ready to thrive and succeed in college are:

- » Resilient
- » Determined
- » Self-aware of their strengths
- » Able to self-advocate
- » Not afraid to ask for help
- » Able to learn from failure
- » Flexible
- » Inquisitive
- » Willing to seek external supports; and
- » Able to make the most of resources

²² Durlak & Weissberg, 2007.

Resilience

Research found that a primary trait of college success was resiliency. After being knocked down by the student's first poor grade, or first experience as the only person of color in classes, or facing a difficult issue with the registrar or financial aid office, or having to deal with the overwhelming process to address a housing issue or change a class, resiliency is the student's ability to get back up, reassess how to solve the problem, and then take action to move forward.²³

Afterschool programs employ a variety of strategies and experiences to build resiliency in youth.

Many afterschool program staff are transparent about issues youth will encounter in college.

Staff talk frankly about race and economic class, cultural norms and stereotypes, and negotiating relationships with different groups. They help youth process and learn from failures, and work with youth to identify potential obstacles and how

to get past them. Most of all, they work to promote a more positive sense of self and self-worth through the conversations and opportunities provided through their programs. These programs are working with youth to develop the skills and knowledge to persist and most importantly the belief that they can persist.

**Every single time I ask class deans what quality they want in an incoming student, besides being smart, they say resilience. Is there evidence that the student had a challenge and overcame that challenge?
—College Admissions Officer**

Self-Advocacy

Those organizations which focus on college preparation and success are directly working to make sure students become advocates for themselves on many fronts. The youth development support young people experience in their afterschool programs provide a foundation to develop core concepts that include motivation, self-efficacy and self-advocacy. To support building self-advocacy, afterschool programs may provide youth with conversation starters and role plays so youth feel more comfortable reaching out to teachers (and one day professors) for support when they are struggling academically. They provide the encouragement and strategies for youth to ask for resources they need to be successful. For example, helping a young person realize they could ask for additional financial aid through letter writing and phone calls if a college did not provide them sufficient funds. Through diverse strategies to build self-advocacy, students can better utilize resources available to them and enrich their college experience.

Social Identity

Afterschool programs encourage the development of a social identity through enrichment programs and cultural and service opportunities, which allow youth to develop interests they can pursue further in college. As students gain access to colleges, program staff review with youth the different opportunities available on campus and encourage youth to take advantage of them. In addition, the very process of working with a group of youth on accessing college develops a cohort which can build a culture of success where youth hold each other accountable, share strengths and weaknesses, and support each other. Even youth who ultimately go to different colleges in different cities, often hold onto these friendships and support each other when they are in college.

23 Adelman, C. (2006, February). *The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion from High School through College*. Retrieved from U.S. Department of Education: <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/toolbox.pdf>

College Knowledge and Advising

With their intimate knowledge of their participants, CBOs are well positioned to help students and their families make choices that won't leave them financially overwhelmed, academically adrift, and socially isolated.

Setting Expectation of College Completion

Afterschool programs have the opportunity to set the expectation that college is a viable and attainable option for their youth, and to create a college-going environment. Many staff working with the youth are college students or graduates who bring their own experiences and knowledge of the requirements of college. They share these experiences and provide examples of how they overcame challenges. For middle school youth, afterschool programs create an environment where applying to and attending college becomes a natural next step toward larger life goals. As youth age, many programs invest in tiered mentoring models in which juniors and seniors counsel freshmen on strategies for success in high school, and recent alumni return during school breaks to share their experiences on navigating access and transition to colleges. Some programs are even able to employ recent college-attending alumni of the program to serve as mentors to juniors and seniors as they enter the college

We have a five-week summer institute for 9th and 10th graders. They meet at a local college for four weeks, then go to an out-of-city college for a week. This structure really allows youth to bond with each other and participate in activities to keep building that sense of group and individual accountability.
—Afterschool Program Staff

We provide exposure for our youth to experience college life: what college classes (and seminars) are like and to understand that college is something different. It's not 13th grade.

—Afterschool Program Staff

application process in earnest, allowing them to gain a perspective on the rigors, discoveries, and growth associated with college. The afterschool programs that set college expectations reinforce those expectations through the program's physical setting. They have designated spaces to counsel youth and post pennants of colleges attended by staff and alums as well as college acceptances and photos of trips to colleges.

The Afterschool “Guidance Counselor”: Navigating the Admissions Process

In the absence of family members to guide them, many aspiring low-income, historically underrepresented and first generation college students must turn to the person entrusted to help them: their high school guidance counselor. However, young people attending large urban public schools rarely receive adequate support from their high school guidance counselors. Instead of advising, these counselors are time-strapped, often managing a large caseload with much of their time devoted to disciplinary issues. What time they have to focus on

“My high school guidance counselor did her best for the 400 kids she had [in her caseload].
– College Student

students preparing for college is often limited to transcript requests or registering for SATs.

As a result, many community-based organizations are stepping in to fill the void. Formally, organizations are hiring staff with a breadth of knowledge on colleges and the college access process. They engage in college exposure opportunities, develop relationships with college admissions representatives, educate youth and families on the college admissions process, including requirements and timelines, as well as a location to complete applications and the support to submit applications. In addition to afterschool programs providing written recommendation letters for college applications, the staff also call or write colleges to advocate for youth, providing colleges with an opportunity to learn more about the strengths of individual young people.

Program Snapshot

Children's Aid Society: EXCEL Program

Through a three-day college essay writing seminar, seniors work with teachers and with volunteers one-on-one to brainstorm, outline, write, and proofread college essays. They walk away with a finished, or close to finished, product which they can use for college applications. Students learn the steps of the college admissions process and the basic structure for college essays. The keys to success are that volunteers are college students and recent graduates who share their experiences and insights about college with students; and relationships between students and volunteers often continue after the seminar ends, allowing students to use the volunteers as resources throughout the college application process.

The Match: Choosing the Right School

High-achieving, low-income students are 15 times less likely to apply to selective colleges than high-achieving, high-income students.²⁴

Matching can have important implications for student persistence. For low-income, historically underrepresented and first generation students, poor college matching has proven to be detrimental to their success. Finding the right fit can help youth integrate socially and academically once they begin college. CBOs suggest that finding the right school can help steer students and their families away from potential hurdles that may serve as stumbling blocks down the road to degree completion. Because they often work with young people over the course of several years, CBOs may also have the opportunity to know students better and make more informed suggestions on potential college matches. Additionally, CBOs can hold conversations around diversity and cultural climate during the selection process and make sure students are aware of the cultural outlets available to them on campus.

We really get to know the student and discuss whether it would be a good school for him or her considering: whether there's a Greek life, small or large community, supportive of an independent thinker...

—Afterschool Program Staff

²⁴ Hoxby, C. and Avery, C. (2013, Spring). *The Missing "One-Offs": The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low-Income Students*. Brookings Papers on Economic Activity. Retrieved from: http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/BPEA/Spring-2013/2013a_hoxby.pdf?la=en

The value of CBO partnerships in matching students is not lost on colleges. For some colleges, these partnerships have proven to “bear more fruit,” than their relationships with high school guidance counselors, noting that while guidance counselors could potentially encourage larger numbers of students to apply, CBOs can devote more time to ensuring that the college fits well for individual students.

In order to make better matches, CBOs learn as much as possible about colleges and communicate this information to youth and parents. One way afterschool programs can begin this conversation with colleges is by connecting with them at PASE’s annual college fair for community-based organizations. The staff can also visit and tour the college campuses to gather information about them.

Financial Advising and Planning

The same perceived cost barriers that contribute to undermatching also lead many low-income families to believe that college – any college – may be unaffordable, leading some students to write-off college as a possibility long before their senior year.²⁵

Too often, low-income, historically underrepresented and first generation aspiring college youth and families are not aware of the full costs of college (e.g. books, sports team trips, study abroad, travel home during holidays), the implications and requirements of loans (e.g. parent loan payments that start immediately and obligation to repay the loan even if a student drops out), and are not versed in the intricacies and mechanics of the financial aid process. This gap in information can result in decisions in which youth are saddled with long-term debt, distracted from studies by the burden of working to pay for college, or missing a good college opportunity because at first glance they think they cannot afford it. Additionally, “nine out of ten students who need substantial remediation when they enter their postsecondary course of study never complete [college].”²⁶ Remediation not only extends the amount of time it would take to earn a college degree, but consumes critical financial aid before a student completes college.

“Students often have the misconception that state schools are always cheaper than private schools, which actually often have better financial aid packages. Students lack the understanding about sticker price vs. actual price of colleges. —College Student

Many afterschool programs offer sessions with youth and parents on understanding the FAFSA and CSS Financial Aid Profile forms, financial aid pitfalls and requirements, and strategies to finance college. Still other programs develop two- and four-year plans for paying for college with students. Program staff have the challenging conversations with students to look beyond the school they have their heart set on. For

²⁵ The Executive Office of the President (2014, January).

²⁶ The Executive Office of the President, p. 9. Data from the 31 Complete College America partner states indicate that roughly 22 percent of developmental education students at community colleges complete remediation requirements and associated “gatekeeper courses” within 2 years (Report available at: http://www.completecollege.org/resources_and_reports/).

example, if a young person receives an acceptance letter from his or her dream school and despite little aid being provided, he or she is tempted to immediately accept the offer, without regard to the financial burden of this decision. This is where an afterschool program may step in to help youth review choices and options based on their long-term plans. Conversely, programs can steer youth and parents to consider a school which appears to be a more expensive school, but might have a more generous financial aid package.

Parental Involvement

Afterschool programs have frequently known and worked with families through the many years of a child's development. This relationship allows afterschool staff to build on their long partnership and to speak frankly with parents when meeting with them about the college process.

The numerous hurdles faced by first generation college students are often equally new and unfamiliar to immigrant parents who are unfamiliar with the U.S. education system. In addition, for students who have family responsibilities, including earning wages, and caring for family members, afterschool programs can be instrumental in helping parents understand that the short term "sacrifice" of their student attending college will lead to the student being in a better position to help the family later.

Afterschool programs can engage and connect with parents throughout the college decision making process by taking parents on college trips to learn about what different schools offer, helping them better understand college life, and answering questions about financial aid. Many organizations provide workshops for parents on navigating the application process and planning financially. To encourage and support participation in workshops, many community organizations create parent-friendly environments by providing workshop in the evening or on weekends, by offering child care, and by providing food. Programs invest time into providing individualized and group sessions to help parents prepare emotionally for the student to leave and to plan for filling the gap of family responsibilities the student was managing. They can match parents with one another, providing opportunities for parents to connect for peer-to-peer support. Lastly, they can work with undocumented families and provide information to ensure security during the college application process.



The Summer Before College

The Summer Before College: Promising Practices

Understanding Summer Melt

Research speculates that Summer Melt affects between 10 to 40% of college-accepted students. The percentage is higher for students from lower- or middle-income families, low academic achievers, and for youth enrolling in two-year degree colleges as compared to youth enrolling in four-year colleges.²⁷

The summer between high school graduation and college matriculation offers opportunities for community-based organizations and higher education institutions to partner in an effort to reduce Summer Melt – the phenomenon of students who intend to go to college in the spring, but do not make it to their college campus in the fall. The majority of the research on Summer Melt has been conducted by Castleman, Page and Snowdon, and their findings are supported by the experiences of staff of community-based organizations. Students may face anxiety about the unknown and pressure from families as potential stumbling blocks to entering college as planned. Additionally, some barriers to matriculation are linked to students feeling overwhelmed by the paperwork to be completed over the summer including housing preferences, financial aid documents, enrollment forms, health and insurance forms, and course selections. Many students from low-income, historically underrepresented, or first generation backgrounds are unfamiliar with completing this paperwork, may not have computers or internet access at home to facilitate getting these tasks done, or may not even know to look for these documents in the mail.²⁸

Freezing Summer Melt

There exist many examples of promising practices for decreasing the rates of Summer Melt by preparing students to complete the final steps before matriculation, adjust to college life and utilize campus support services. These practices vary in the level of intensity based on CBOs' mission, staff capacity, funding and other resources, and their relationships with higher education institutions.

Some afterschool programs focus intently on the initial transition to campus process and guiding students to integrate as seamlessly as possible into their new campus environment. Other afterschool services may continue well into the first year of college and, in some cases, until graduation.

Summer Outreach and Support

Whether scheduling in-person meetings or reaching students via text messaging, community-based organizations are developing programs that extend through the summer to support students to stay on track to start college in the fall. CBOs may help students create a master contact list of who to call on campus with questions about filling out critical enrollment forms (housing, medical, financial aid, course selection). Programs are also focusing on sustaining morale about college so that students feel excited to go at the end of summer. They continue to build a deeper foundation of trust with their youth so that they will want to reach out to staff if they need help over the summer or once in college. To reinforce college attendance in the fall, some programs focus on fun social gatherings and activities for all of their youth or cohorts of their college accepted students, such as rock climbing, soccer, trips to parks, and

27 Castleman, Page, & Snowdon, (2013)

28 Castleman, Page, & Snowdon, (2013)

barbeques. They may also establish mentorship programs during the summer between current college students and rising freshmen to begin building connections to college.

Community-based Organization Staffing Models

Depending on available resources, community-based organizations may hire dedicated counselors to reach out to and meet with students throughout the summer. Others have structures in place where students are “transferred” to another group of program staff who will offer supports throughout the college experience. These staff continue to work with accepted students beginning in late spring and early summer familiarizing them with their college, solidifying feelings of connectedness with the school, and building understanding about how to access summer services and programs.

Preparing to Transition: Tasks and Checklists

Community-based organizations can play a critical role for their accepted college students by helping them map out tasks they need to complete during the spring and summer before college starts. One afterschool program shared that they create thorough “blueprints” for each of their students’ first semesters. The blueprint includes tasks and deadlines for:

- » planning how the student will physically get to campus
- » completing housing questionnaires (reviewing how to fill out the forms and roommate questions)
- » attending college orientation
- » registering and enrolling for classes
- » completing health forms (vaccination forms, understanding what their health insurance covers)
- » making payments (tuition, fees, deposits)

These transition task plans not only provide a framework of tasks for accepted students, but provide them with a tool that they can use to facilitate conversations with their parents about documents required for matriculation.

Program Snapshot

Harlem RBI

The Summer Legends Boot Camp focuses on getting youth ready to think about and discuss the college experience. This intensive five-week camp involves a mixture of group and individual services featuring workshops on topics such as time management, knowing your community, getting the help that you need, relationships, what attending a residential college means for you and for your family, financial aid, and thinking about what kinds of campus organizations you want to join. Additionally, they hold individual meetings where the college transition staff meet with the students and talk about what they are going to do to be ready for the first day. The staff also conduct an Academic Game Plan with students to review first semester course load choices, and a College Life Game Plan to ensure youth have paid all their registration fees, have gone to an orientation, and are on track for connecting with their academic advisor.

Research shows that a minimum of two hours of outreach and counseling over the summer will increase the probability of a student matriculating to college to 85%.²⁹

29 Daugherty, L. (2012, November). Summer Link: A Counseling Intervention to Address the Transition from High School to College in a Large Urban District. RAND Corporation. Retrieved from: <http://sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/files/cepr-sdp/files/sdp-summer-melt-academic-paper-summer-link.pdf?m=1431312870>

Learning to Access Resources on Campus

Many CBOs can actively help youth learn about and understand the importance of on-campus resources, but this information is most successful when coupled with the ongoing self-advocacy and leadership development work at which afterschool organizations excel.

To assist students with developing a sense of autonomy, some afterschool programs try to connect their students with on campus resources that may ease their transition into college. They use mapping games and scavenger hunts to help youth find counseling services, writing centers, or cultural organizations that can offer them much needed support once on campus. They also counsel accepted students on finding free or low-cost supplies (e.g. books, lab equipment) to offset college costs. Community-based organizations also provide young people with glossary lists³⁰ of terms they should know as college students. Without this kind of guidance and counseling, CBOs shared that low-income, historically underrepresented and first generation students often do not find these programs, services, and supports on their own, and may not even realize these resources are available to them. For those who are aware of these services, they may be uncomfortable or embarrassed to actually seek help. One student shared that even with the knowledge of various services available to him, it's "still up to you to take the initiative, to say 'I need help'..." University staff has observed a similar trend. One college representative suggested that CBOs can help their students by showing them that "there are a million resources at all these colleges," and that it's not a sign of weakness to ask for help.

Summer Bridge Programs

Afterschool programs and colleges both provide formal and informal summer bridge programs designed to expose accepted low-income, historically underrepresented and first generation students to the rigors of college work, orient them to the college campus and resources, and develop a cohort of peer support before the intensity of college life begins. These programs also serve to further enrich their college readiness, normalize remediation, and support a smooth transition to college.

Through informal summer bridge programs, colleges may host afterschool programs to offer summer workshops: the afterschool program provides sessions that focus on further developing college knowledge as well as social and emotional skills, while the college provides academic preparation workshops.

Community-based organizations also encourage and remind accepted students to participate in the formal summer bridge programs offered by some colleges that include both academic enrichment and immersion into college campus living, building a cohort of students experiencing similar changes.³¹

**“I probably would have forgotten about my summer bridge program, but my afterschool college counselor called and emailed me just to remind me.
—College Student**

30 College Terms, Defined. Retrieved from: <http://collegelife.about.com/od/glossary/>

31 An example of a New York State summer bridge program is the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), which provides economically and educationally disadvantaged students the possibility of a college education through scholarships, tutoring, counseling and summer orientations (<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/kiap/colldev/HEOP/>).

Accepted students have opportunities to speak with current students about college life, meet faculty, and identify and locate campus resources such as the writing center, medical and mental health clinics, and cultural groups. Youth reported these programs to be helpful in gearing up academically for their freshman year and in getting to know several of their fellow students.



Life in College

Life in College

Maintaining close relationships with students once they go to college is critical for community-based organizations actively working to support college persistence – a sentiment shared by the colleges themselves. When in college many young people are living independently for the first time, and they will have to learn to manage various aspects of their lives as college students. Students are balancing academics, school year and summer employment, and social commitments, while also navigating the campus resources to meet their needs, such as connecting with their advisors, learning how to manage bureaucracy, accessing the writing or tutoring center, making friends, and connecting with cultural groups.

CBOs can have real conversations with students about student life. What does it mean to live in the dorms? What does it mean to wash your own clothes? What does it mean to have to eat cafeteria food?

—College Administrator

To support them at this stage, many community-based organizations have begun strategic outreach and engagement efforts, some more intensive than others. Afterschool program staff who focus specifically on college persistence provide direct support to the college student and make calls to colleges on behalf of the students to advocate for their needs. Some CBOs create outreach calendars, tracking the critical moments to check-in and provide support such as during exams, before holidays or in preparation for summer break. In some cases, organizations follow the college students through social media channels, such as Facebook, to see how their alumni are doing. One CBO shared that they maintain a record of all the points of contact they have with their college students and has found that there is a correlation between the number of interventions students receive and their GPA and graduation rates. Overall, many staff are accessible as touchstones – to be the supportive voice at the other end of the phone when a student has had a hard day and is feeling “knocked down,” and to remind students of their strengths and where they can access support services while away at school. One college student shared that having that support when going through college is really what made the difference in their success on campus.

Program Snapshot

Summer Immersion Consortium

Seven community-based organizations located in Bronx, NY formed a consortium that offers a six-week summer immersion program for their accepted college students who are entering two-year City University of New York (CUNY) schools. With a focus on math and writing, the consortium tries to get youth to place out of remedial classes. During the academic year, about 20 students from consortium organizations come together weekly as a cohort for tutoring and group discussions. To support their students who enrolled in four-year schools, consortium members are assigned regions and travel to the colleges to meet with alums from all of the organizations as a group.

Time Management

Trying to balance school, work, and life presents a challenge for many low-income, historically underrepresented and first generation students. Students who are spread too thin between academics and work often disengage from classes as well as from social and academic connections on campus that would otherwise help them prosper.³² Additionally, college students face time constraints if they do not have a balanced course load that includes a range of classes based on their interests as well as workload. Students may not recognize or understand that much of their learning takes place outside of the classroom, such as at the library, in study groups, or with professors during office hours, and that all of these activities require time in their schedules.

Many students must work to support themselves, and financial aid packages often require work-study. Students then struggle with managing enough working hours to support themselves and end up sacrificing academic concentration because they work so many hours.

Students want and need to engage in campus clubs and social activities to build connections with other students, and to be more successful in persisting in college. This requires them to incorporate time into their schedule to participate in activities of interest which will also help them further develop their interpersonal and cognitive skills. Additionally, some students, particularly in their first year, want to go home often to maintain connections with family and friends. Some end up visiting every weekend, taking away from time when they might be studying. Afterschool programs can help students plan for achieving a work-academic-social-family balance that allows for success in college.

Program Snapshot

Cypress Hills Local Development Corps

The Moving Toward Achievement (MTA) program involves formal partnerships with two colleges in the City University of New York (CUNY) system: New York City College of Technology (“City Tech”) and Kingsborough Community College. The MTA program enables Cypress Hills to support the transition to and completion of college for the students they worked with in high school. The program employs two persistence counselors who have work space at the colleges and provide “concrete supports to young people so they can be successful in college.” These supports include: covering transportation costs through the provision of transit metro cards so youth can get to class; a book stipend each semester (as FAFSA dollars often arrive after the start of the semester); events that create a college-going culture; and intensive case management support for students in the cohort. Much of the success of this model is attributed to cohort building, use of youth development principles, individualized case management, and promotion of self-care and self-advocacy.

Academic Advising

Some community-based organizations hire academic advisors to guide their first-year college students through selecting courses to ensure they are balancing courses that have different levels of demands throughout the year, and to review grades each semester to support students to stay on track. However, organizations also recognize that this is an expensive measure that is difficult to sustain. Experiences

32 Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal. (2001). *Swimming Against the Tide: The Poor in American Higher Education*. The College Board Press. New York, NY.

shared by students, CBOs, and colleges indicate that students need academic planning services in order to make good academic decisions early in their college careers. One college student shared that he was overloaded with challenging coursework in his first semester, causing him a lot of stress. Another student commented that had she taken more “sensible” classes early on, she would have been able to graduate earlier. A university representative shared that she offers extensive academic advising to students, and not only connects them to tutoring services, but helps them create calendars to manage their course load. However, she admits that such hands-on advising may not be the norm at colleges and universities.

Social and Emotional

Students need “strategies that foster and fortify social networks, campus-connectedness and sense of belonging, self-confidence, and academic motivation. Such supports include positive relationships with faculty and strong peer-to-peer networks, both of which help provide students with the personal agency needed for academic success.”³³

A strong predictor of college success is the student’s ability to find his or her “social niche” on campus, engaging in the campus’ social, academic, and cultural resources. Students from lower income backgrounds are more likely to disengage from various aspects of campus life, including taking part in clubs, engaging in discussions with friends, or even using recreational facilities.³⁴ In addition, college students often face culture shock, trying to manage living in large dormitories, sometimes with multiple roommates, being in a different kind of community (urban, suburban, rural), or being one of only a few students from their ethnic or racial background. One student shared that even if schools are statistically diverse, cohorts or social groups for the different racial and ethnic groups on campus still may not exist.

**“My afterschool program counselor doesn’t know it, but it’s really good when she does check-ins, and when she came to see me. I could vent to her and talk to her.
—College Student**

To overcome the threat of isolation and to support their college students as they manage social and emotional adjustments, some CBOs schedule regular check-ins with students, especially those who need the most support. Some CBOs have found specific times of risk for students. For example, one CBO found that the first 21 days of college are critical. Students drop and add classes, and sometimes stop going to class altogether. Around midterms, students who do not do well may panic and want to drop out. Community-based organizations have used a variety of strategies for checking in, including phone calls and emails to the students. Some host Skype/Google hangouts for students at different campuses to check-in with each other. Others have college-based individuals, such as alumni of the afterschool program who are now upperclassmen, or college staff with whom the CBOs have partnerships to connect with the student in person. Some CBOs will also send their college students care packages and connect

33 Research to Practice Brief (2010, Fall). *The Role of Social Supports and Self-Efficacy in College Success*. Pathways to College Network, Institute for Higher Education Policy & National College Access Network.

34 Terenzini, et al. (2001).

them with other alumni who are already at the college to serve as peer mentors throughout the year.

CBOs may also reach out to colleges and ask the school to introduce students to affordable places to eat with their friends, provide information about local banking options, and introduce students to “town” life, helping students better integrate into university life.

School and Summer Breaks

Often when low-income, historically underrepresented, or first generation students return home during school holidays or summer vacation, they return to a community where they may have friends who did not attend college, and who do not understand the pressures of college life. Some students may come home to family responsibilities that re-surface – being a wage earner, taking care of a sick family member, or other family struggles – all of which could result in the student losing sight of the long-term benefits of a college degree and drifting away from academics. Students may be swayed to stay home after the break.

We hold a big catered dinner the day before Thanksgiving, workshops over winter break, individual check in and collection of grades in January, barbeques in the spring, and we try to set up our college students with internships in the summer.

—Afterschool Program Staff

During these critical times, some community-based organizations maintain a college-going culture by facilitating connections between young people and their college-going peers, and ensuring that students do not lose momentum in their college success journey. CBOs have organized alumni meet-ups during school vacations and hosted events where their college students can engage in conversations about what is exciting and challenging about college life.

Students may come together as cohort groups with fellow college peers to discuss shared struggles and successes while at college and when returning home. CBOs sometimes host holiday gatherings and invite students back for individual check-in visits. Organizations may also engage students in leadership roles to mentor current high school students in the afterschool program.

Work and Finances

In addition to providing reminders to complete financial aid forms beyond freshman year, some afterschool programs also support students as they create and update resumes and plan for jobs and careers. Low-income students cannot afford unpaid career exploration and/or resume-building internships that more affluent students

The reason why students weren't going back to college after freshman year is they had no idea what they were going to do in terms of finances for the second year of school and then couldn't make it happen.

—Afterschool Program Staff

can pursue, which also typically connects students with role models who have completed college and/or graduate school. As a result, they must sometimes settle for “wage jobs” which, according to college students, offer income without creating a foundation for career path development, and do not support

the excitement to go back to college as do more fulfilling summer experiences.

Through their programming, some community-based organizations help students explore choices and opportunities for meaningful paid work experiences (including college work study and summer internships and jobs) that strengthen their post-college employment options and reinforce a college-going culture. Some CBOs hold career fairs that provide opportunities for students to practice networking skills and connect with potential employers. They may also expose college students to different career paths by bringing in professionals to discuss their work. Organizations can also utilize their own network through board members and other connections to provide jobs and internships.

Another important role many CBOs play is continuing to guide and encourage college students to make full use of their college's career center – for resumes, finding jobs and internships, and connecting with the college's alumni, among other services. Many colleges are sensitive to the needs of low-income youth and have designated funds to provide stipends so students can participate in unpaid internships.

Program Snapshot

New Settlement Apartments

To teach networking skills and support alumni as they look for jobs, New Settlement Apartments created a student-run, online job-finding project. Using Facebook, students designed a dedicated group where they post job opportunities that they find through research, their school career centers, or through word of mouth. Keys to success include:

- » The project is a part of the alumni program, encouraging students to stay connected.
- » Students do independent research with staff support.
- » Students design and maintain the group, while staff monitors the site to ensure it remains appropriate and professional.
- » Emails are sent to the group to share new information.

Conclusion

PASE is committed to supporting afterschool programs as they prepare young people to be successful in college, during all the stages of a student's life: in middle and high school, in the summer before college, and during their college years. Investing in the education, training and professional development of the staff who work in community-based organizations will be critical to assuring better outcomes for the young people who attend their programs. Developing resources, such as guides, action planning tools and curricula, and providing access to emerging research will be instrumental in broadening afterschool programs' effectiveness. Further impact can be achieved through the on-going sharing of promising practices, training on evidenced-based practice, and facilitated collaborations among community-based groups.

Creating opportunities to connect community-based professionals with admissions and campus life professionals from higher education will allow for partnerships to be built for student success. We hope that by broadening the understanding of the skills and resources developed in high-quality afterschool programs which strengthen a young person's ability to persist in college, **Partnering for Success: The Role of Afterschool in College Persistence** will spark new partnerships and collaborations among the many institutions who strive for student success.

Perhaps most importantly, the key to advancing afterschool's role in college persistence will be the dedication of resources to support and build on the best and promising practices in community-based organizations. Strategic investment can strengthen these vital programs and promote strong partnerships to assure that all students have the opportunity to gain admission to, thrive in, and graduate from college.

Please join us in assuring access and success for all students by continuing the conversation at www.pasesetter.org/initiatives/college-prep-and-success/college-persistence.

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For additional research, visit www.pasesetter.org/initiatives/college-prep-and-success/college-persistence

About PASE

The Partnership for After School Education (PASE) is a child-focused organization that promotes and supports quality afterschool programs, particularly those serving young people from underserved communities. An innovative pioneer in the development and advancement of the afterschool field, PASE was formed in 1993 to professionalize afterschool services so that providers could deliver consistent, high-quality programming to youth and increase their capacity to meet the needs of their communities. PASE is committed to providing the more than 1,600 organizations in our network with the support they need to provide the 500,000 young people in New York City's afterschool programs with the high-quality services they deserve.

To accomplish our goals, PASE strengthens afterschool agencies through expert training and management support designed to increase program effectiveness and efficiency; leads the afterschool field as a thoughtful innovator; connects diverse stakeholders to develop consensus on priorities and best practices; and champions the needs of frontline staff by reaching out to policy makers and the public.

PASE's mission and practices have remained consistent for over two decades while our programmatic focus has remained responsive to the evolving needs of an evolving field. PASE's primary program areas include initiatives designed: to provide agencies with the tools they need to expand their college prep and success services; to build agencies' capacity to provide high-quality summer programming; to support and promote emerging leadership in youth serving agencies; to infuse youth development principles into science, technology, engineering, and math programming; to assist agencies in identifying and measuring youth outcomes appropriate to their specific programs; to help prepare young people to engage in a globalized economy as global citizens; and to assess needs and provide professional development for the afterschool field.

Through our College Prep and Success in Afterschool initiative, PASE provides a host of services to community-based organizations to build their capacity to provide high quality college prep and success work, including: professional development workshops for the afterschool field, technical assistance, and combination college fairs and citywide forums for staff of community-based afterschool programs and institutions of higher education.

We have also developed resources including:

- » College Prep Afterschool: A Practitioner's Guide to Effective Programming for Middle and High School Youth
- » College Prep Programming Assessment Tool (CPPAT)
- » College Prep Milestones: A Guide for Afterschool Practitioners

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