

**National Partnership for Educational Access
Best Practices from Workshop Sessions
From Access to Success: Best Practices for Student Achievement
April 8–9, 2010**

At the National Partnership for Educational Access Conference on April 8-9, 2010, participants wrote down best practices and ideas that stood out for them during the workshop sessions. We have compiled these comments below.

Hopefully some ideas will be new to you. Other may seem obvious, but it can often be helpful to see the “obvious” on paper, as it can help you plan and act on measurable goals! The best practices are grouped according to conference track and session name. We only selected the comments that make sense outside the context of a specific workshop session and edited them when needed. To view the PowerPoints for each session, please visit the NPEA website: <http://bit.ly/npeappts>.

BEST PRACTICES

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Program

The Role of **Parent Engagement** in Student Access and Success

1. Include financial management information and strategies when providing parent education in programs.
2. Reach out to fathers to participate when you need volunteers. It is often the mothers who volunteer first. We need the fathers to feel involved and engaged too.

Increasing and Diversifying **the STEM Pipeline** through Enrichment Programs

1. Give your students an opportunity to provide feedback about the program on a weekly basis. This sharing creates a feeling of ownership.

2. No one program can serve all the needs of every student. If you can, offer program options or activities that can match student interest and academic need so that the student obtains the greatest benefit from his/her participation.
3. Teaching math and science in a real-life setting is important. This helps students relate what they are learning in the classroom to their own lives.

Management

New Strategies for Access: **Public-Private School Partnerships**

1. (1) You can do anything if you put your mind to it. (2) You can do anything with the right people around the table. (3) There is a thirst to help out in this country.
2. Make roles explicit in partnerships.
3. Make sure that all students and parents are aware they deserve a quality education.
4. If possible, use the resources of independent schools to support learning experiences for both public and private school students. Bridge both worlds to provide a forum for intellectual and social exchange.

Strategic Planning: Braving the Journey

1. (1) Allow the research to support goals of the program. (2) Consensus is key: activate all members to be engaged in the process.
2. Invite donors to visit your program and meet everyone – this helps your participants and your fundraising.
3. Communicate often with your board to prevent surprises.
4. Create a theory of change as part of your strategic plan. Have a program and evaluation committee on your board. Fall back on research.
5. If it makes sense for your organization, hire an outside consultant. Engage your entire organization in the process.
6. In strategic planning, it is important to establish "anchors" to frame what you can do well. This means identifying the critical "who, what, where or how" for your organization.
7. Move from ideal wishing (e.g. we need an endowment for real sustainability) to realistic planning (e.g. we need a plan for growth and sustainability).
8. Plan from a position of strength, and be proactive in a crisis situation.
9. Preserve the core of your mission and stimulate progress. Your strategic plan should be comfortably ambitious.
10. When you're developing a strategic plan, ask if the status quo is okay, and be prepared to "let go".
11. Remember that a strategic plan is a living document.

Telling Your Story so People Will Care (and Give)

1. Giving feedback cards to individual donors is a great idea.
2. Integrate the look and message of all your online media.

Successful College Contexts for Black, Latino and Native Students

1. Dream big for your students. They can accomplish anything with the right amount of support, access, and successful mentors who motivate around them.
2. Focus on 3 major areas when working with students: financial, academic, and social.
3. Emphasize a message of "obligation" with scholars, both to themselves and also to their families and communities. "From those to whom much is given, much is expected."
4. Learn what university programs and scholarships look for so you can prepare students.
5. It makes a positive impact on students when the CEO, Head of School, Director, etc. spends regular time with students.

6. Lesson for students: never pass up an opportunity to share your goals and aspirations with others - you never know what others may want to do to support them.
7. Parent involvement is essential to student success.
8. Consider non-cognitive variables when looking for students geared toward success.
9. Teach students how to take advantage of opportunities around them. Be proactive - be a consumer of your own education.

Student Services

More Than a Number: **Supporting a Diverse Community** of Learners

1. Recognize the importance of affinity groups for students.
2. It is important to include more curricula around race, inclusion and classism in your school or program.

The Common Application and Creating a **Competitive College Portfolio**

1. Advise students to not just apply for colleges, but have them understand which schools would be the best fit for their personal, social and academic needs.
2. Advise students to have an appropriate email address. Facebook photos, slogans, quotes, etc. should be private or fully appropriate.
3. Give the Common Application to juniors and have them create a college profile.
4. Off-season contact with college admissions is crucial.

Research, Policy & Evaluation

If I Knew Then what I Know Now: **Building Successful Evaluation**

1. You cannot evaluate everything so focus on areas where you are prepared to act immediately.
2. A great suggestion is the "survey punch card" - a summative document for all surveys that captures: (1) who is being evaluated, (2) how long the evaluation will take, (3) A summary of findings, and (4) the follow up action plan.
3. Clarity of goals for surveys and evaluations is crucial. If you are not going to act on it, don't evaluate it now.
4. Be reasonable about what your program data can tell you about program outcomes.
5. Before completing an evaluation, be clear on the goals you are trying to accomplish.
6. You do not need to survey everything.
7. The Pathways to College Network is a great resource for research:
www.pathwaystocollege.net

Tools of the Trade

Financial Aid and the Recession

1. Remind parents they are doing a great job, regardless of the outcome of admissions and financial aid decisions.
2. Work diligently with families to help them complete applications.

Advocating Traditionally Underserved Students and Families to be **College Consumers** in the College Process

1. Bring in professionals - financial aid and admissions - to talk to families early in the game to give them the knowledge and realistic sense of what to expect during the college process. It will help them learn that they can be consumers and advocates in the process.
2. The importance of college confidence – if students and parents don't believe they can go to college, you must dispel this myth!

First Generation **SAT Preparation:** Best Practices for Overcoming Barriers and Motivating Students

1. Have parents write an essay about what it means to them that their child goes to college and give it to their child to read.
2. Help your students learn to type. Imagine what this skill does for their efficiency and ability to manage their time and academic workload.

Financial Aid 101: A College Education is Affordable

1. Make sure the pre-college and access programs implement early awareness classes on the financial aid process.
2. On all levels, students and parents should know how the process works during middle school and should know the dynamics of the college affordability game by 9th grade. Begin the discussion even earlier for undocumented students.
3. Understand and communicate the costs of college and financial aid to students and parents.

Showcase Sessions

Tools for Teachers

1. It is important for teachers to find out what other teachers are doing across the country. Provide them with resources to connect with others if you can.
2. Engage with schools (colleges and universities) and partner with them so that your students can actually experience what it will take and what they must do proactively to attend college, pay for college, and finish college.

College Access and Retention

1. Leverage boys' (especially) predisposition toward competition and movement in the classroom pedagogy and curriculum to deepen skills and content knowledge.
2. Use students to share your organization's message.

Partnership Building

1. Time your college fair at the same time as National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) events in your area as admissions officers are more likely to go to your fair if they are already in the area. You can also have admissions officers visit your program.

Summer Learning

1. Understand your niche. Don't chase the funding and don't let funding drive your programmatic policies and initiatives. Incorporate the research into your program.
2. You can't just give kids a book and expect them to learn. You need to give them the right book and the staff to support and guide them.

Independent School Placement Opportunities

1. Give families the respect they deserve throughout the placement process, but hold them accountable. It's all about communication.
2. Programs that place students at schools must work in partnership with the child, family and school.
3. Teach parents and students the benefits of networking - how and why to do it.
4. Teach students the meaning of being "an alum." Teach students the value of "networking."