

National Partnership for Educational Access 8th Annual Conference Evaluation Summary: Initial Results

On April 27-29, 2016, the National Partnership for Educational Access held its 8th annual conference. Hosted in Baltimore, Maryland, the conference included three keynote presentations (Shaun Harper, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania; Karen Mapp, Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Liz Murray, Homeless to Harvard), a panel presentation (alumni and counselors from different academic enrichment programs and schools), 40 workshops, welcome and networking receptions, and a documentary screening. The conference drew a national crowd of 384.

A comprehensive evaluation was administered at the conference and online to gauge participant experiences. Some 237 attendees completed the survey, representing 66 percent of those eligible to participate. Of the respondents, 64.1 percent were first time conference attendees.

Satisfaction and Value:

A range of questions was asked to gauge participant satisfaction with the conference, including both the logistics and the quality/value of the conference. When asked how valuable they found the conference overall, 93.6 percent indicated they found it valuable or very valuable.

In terms of specific aspects of the conference, of those who attended workshop sessions, 91.5 percent found them valuable or very valuable. Of those who attended the keynote general sessions, 97.2 percent found the keynotes overall valuable or very valuable. Other highly valued conference offerings include the documentary screening and panel (94.5 percent valuable or very valuable), the range of topics covered at the conference (94.3 percent), and time to network/exchange best practices with others (92 percent). The exhibit tables were rated valuable or very valuable by 62.1 percent of attendees, suggesting this could be an area to improve in future years.

All percentages in Table 2 below reflect the value of conference offerings for all attendees for whom each item is applicable.

Table 2. Value of Conference Sessions and Offerings

| How valuable did you find each of the following? | | | | |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| | Not valuable | Somewhat valuable | Valuable | Very valuable |
| Conference overall | 0% (0) | 6.4% (15) | 20.6% (48) | 73% (170) |
| Workshop sessions | 0.4% (1) | 8% (18) | 43.8% (98) | 47.8% (107) |
| Pre-conference workshops | 1.7% (1) | 18.3% (11) | 38.3% (23) | 41.7% (25) |
| Pre-conference site visits | 0% (0) | 16.7% (6) | 41.7% (15) | 41.7% (15) |
| Welcome reception (Wednesday) | 1.5% (2) | 15.8% (21) | 46.6% (62) | 36.1% (48) |
| Documentary screening and panel (Wednesday) | 1.8% (1) | 3.6% (2) | 30.9% (17) | 63.6% (35) |
| Education Champions networking reception (Thurs.) | 1.5% (2) | 14.6% (20) | 47.4% (65) | 36.5% (50) |
| Breakfast conversation tables | 0.8% (1) | 18.3% (24) | 43.5% (57) | 37.4% (49) |
| Range of topics covered during conference | 1.3% (3) | 4.3% (10) | 32.2% (74) | 62.2% (143) |
| Time to network/exchange best practices | 0% (0) | 8% (18) | 36.3% (82) | 55.8% (126) |
| Exhibit tables | 7% (13) | 30.8% (57) | 41.1% (76) | 21.1% (39) |
| Opening session Alumni and Counselor panel | 4.1% (8) | 19.9% (39) | 40.8% (80) | 35.2% (69) |
| Keynote: Shaun Harper | 0.9% (2) | 3.2% (7) | 17.4% (38) | 78.4% (171) |
| Keynote: Karen Mapp | 0.5% (1) | 4.1% (8) | 19.1% (37) | 76.3% (148) |
| Keynote: Liz Murray | 0% (0) | 2.2% (3) | 16.4% (22) | 81.3% (109) |
| Keynote speakers overall | 0% (0) | 2.8% (6) | 22.9% (49) | 74.3% (159) |

When asked to specify two to three of the most valuable aspects of the conference, several respondents referenced the keynote speakers and networking opportunities. Many others referenced the film screening and welcome reception, as well as the breakfast conversation tables and workshops.

Future Conference Going:

When asked about the likelihood of attending next year's conference in Boston, 47.1 percent of respondents indicated they are very likely to attend. Another 20 and 19 percent of respondents are likely and somewhat likely, respectively, to attend next year. Less than five percent of respondents are unlikely to attend. Several attendees noted the timing was difficult for this year's conference, as it directly preceded the May 1st universal college decision date, noting that the earlier April dates for the 2017 conference are much better.

Qualitative Responses:

In addition to the multiple-choice questions, the survey included open-ended questions designed to capture participants' overall thoughts and impressions of the conference. In particular, two questions elicited helpful feedback when planning for next year's conference: "Do you have any speakers or topics you would like to hear at next year's conference?" and "What are two action steps you will take away from the conference that will improve your organization, school, or program practices?"

Speaker/Topic Suggestions:

Among the many speaker suggestions, some include: Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (Harvard, school culture), Howard Stevenson (Harvard Business School), former NPEA keynote Freeman Hrabowski (UMBC), Christopher Emdin (Columbia, urban education, Hip Hop Ed), Gloria Ladson-Billings (University of Wisconsin-Madison, diversity in teacher education), former NPEA keynote Mandy Savitz-Romer (Harvard, school counseling, college access and retention for urban students), Shawn Dove (Campaign for Black Male Achievement), Bernadette Sanchez (DePaul University, race, ethnicity, culture, mentoring), Paul Tough (Author, How Children Succeed), and Robert Putnam (Author, Our Kids).

Among the topics suggested, some include: the Hispanic/Latino experience; careers and career development; racism and classism; self-care and preventing burnout among staff and counselors; fostering a college-going mindset in elementary and middle school years; and social-emotional development. Some trends among topics suggested include generally offering more workshops applicable to elementary and middle school years, an increased focus on career and job readiness, and more interactive sessions that incorporate group activities, discussion, and engagement.

Key Takeaways and Action Steps:

In terms of specific action steps participants will implement to improve their organization or school practices, respondents noted a wide range of takeaways. A number of overlapping examples emerged, with participants noting the importance of meaningful partnerships and collaborations with other similar organizations and schools, peer-mentoring programs and models, parent engagement strategies, and the research of keynote speakers Karen Mapp and Shaun Harper.