

# **Preventing Youth Dropout: Successful Strategies for College Bound**

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Community Based Research Project

December 2008

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## **Executive Summary**

High school dropout is a significant problem in the United States. Only two-thirds of students graduate from high school. For young people from minority backgrounds, the statistics are worse: one half of them do not graduate. At the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula (BGCP), where most members are African American or Hispanic and from low-income families, high school dropout is a real possibility for many students. The Club is thus committed to implementing strategies aimed at keeping vulnerable members in school. Its fledgling College Bound program serves as the Club's strategic means of achieving this objective.

BGCP asked our Stanford University research team to recommend ways to shape College Bound so that it offers services aligned with academic research and best practices from the field. To do so, we conducted qualitative research including a review of dropout prevention literature, interviews with four academic support organizations that BGCP deems successful at retaining high school students, and focus groups with two sets of youth—a group who attend BGCP and a group who attend the Foundation for a College Education, one of the interviewed organizations.

The academic literature on dropout prevention points to the benefits of applying the youth development perspective. According to numerous articles, dropout prevention must no longer be left to schools alone and should instead become a collaborative effort between schools, families, and the community. In addition, the literature urges organizations that serve youth to focus not on preventing specific negative behaviors but rather on developing youth in healthy, positive ways. For programs that specifically target decreasing dropout rates and increasing college attendance, the literature identifies the following key characteristics: giving youth ownership, fostering meaningful relationships, seeking parent involvement, connecting students to future goals, giving students strategic skills, and recognizing students for achievement.

The findings of the literature review are consistent with our research results, which suggest three themes in organizational approach and experience that can be applied within a youth development approach. These themes are (1) building an academic support program around key structural elements; (2) identifying and overcoming the challenges of an operational program; and (3) assessing the impact of a successful program. Under the first theme, we address student recruitment and program marketing campaigns, selecting students for the program, preparing the staff to succeed with students, and building relationships with other players in students' lives. Under the second theme, we highlight obstacles students face in staying in the program and opportunities for keeping them connected to it. Under the third theme, we identify long-term benefits of student participation in academic support programs, the necessity of empowering students to formulate plans for their futures, and means of expanding an academic support program over time.

Synthesizing the data we collected from literature, interviews, and focus groups leads us to recommend a framework that uses the youth development approach as a guiding principle. Within this framework, we concentrate on the themes of establishing a program structure, confronting the challenges of an operational program, and assessing program impact as functional ways of implementing the youth development approach. In making this recommendation, we draw on two definitions of youth development. One definition pinpoints the need for “community relationships that nurture and sustain [opportunities for youth].” In this conception, youth development creates “ties . . . that make up an essential web of mutual accountability and responsibility for young people” (McLaughlin, 2000). The other definition underscores that “preventing problem behaviors is not all that is needed to prepare youth for their future”; rather, it defines youth

development as “enhanc[ing] adolescents’ chances for positive development, [or] engagement in prosocial behaviors and avoidance of health-compromising and future-jeopardizing behaviors” (Roth et al., 1998). We use the term *youth development* to encompass both of these concepts.

Finally, we outline a set of recommendations—grouped by theme and organized into the same categories we use in the Research Results section—that we draw from our findings. We hope these recommendations will be useful to BGCP as it continues to shape College Bound.

## **Introduction**

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The Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula (BGCP) serves hundreds of youth at nine sites. High school students take part in Club programming at the Redwood City, Menlo Park, and East Palo Alto Clubhouses. These students are predominantly African American or Hispanic and from low-income families (S. Mendy, personal communication, December 3, 2008). Given that one third of U.S. high school students—and half of all minority students—do not graduate (Balfanz, Fox, Bridgeland, & McNaught, 2008; Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006), it is likely that some BGCP members will consider dropping out of high school. In light of the Club’s mission to *guide and inspire youth to develop the attitudes and life skills they need to thrive*, Club leadership has committed to developing protective programming that will help keep Club members in school. The Club views its fledgling College Bound program as a strategic means of keeping vulnerable students engaged academically.

Recognizing the varied challenges of attempting to combat the dropout problem, BGCP asked our Stanford University research team to investigate best practices that College Bound can implement to help retain students in the program and in school. We set out to do so with these broad questions in mind:

- What motivates students to stay in academic support programs?
- How do these programs retain and support youth?
- What challenges do these programs face?

When we began researching these questions, BGCP was piloting College Bound at one Clubhouse. While we conducted our research, the program expanded into all three BGCP Clubhouses, reaching 70 high school students. Programmatic elements are now consistent across these sites. They include weekly advising meetings between case managers and students, tutoring, quiet study time, college application assistance, college-related workshops and events, and monthly opportunities to experience the academic, social, and cultural communities on college campuses (S. Mendy, personal communication, December 3, 2008). Because we were not tasked with assessing College Bound in its initial form, our findings and conclusions detail successful strategies in general; our report is not an assessment of those practices already in place at College Bound. We offer our recommendations to BGCP as guidelines for continuing to shape College Bound, and we commend the Club for how well its current format aligns with our findings.

To formulate our recommendations, we conducted:

- a literature review,
- interviews with representatives of four organizations that BGCP deems successful at retaining high school students, which are AVID, BUILD, Eastside College Preparatory School, and the Foundation for a College Education (FCE),
- and two focus groups, one with students from BGCP’s East Palo Alto Clubhouse and another with students from FCE, also in East Palo Alto.

## **Literature Review**

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### **PUTTING THE DROPOUT PROBLEM IN CONTEXT**

The literature discussing high school dropout trends relays with urgency that we are now facing a grave problem in education. Authors commonly refer to the dropout situation as an “epidemic,” a “catastrophe,” or a major “crisis.” According to a recent guidebook released by America’s Promise Alliance, “more than 1.2 million students drop out of America’s high schools each year, and at least 15 million children overall are at risk of not reaching productive adulthood” (Balfanz et al., 2008). While about one-third of all

public high school students fail to graduate every year, this group includes half of minority students, revealing an under-representation of minority high school graduates (Balfanz et al., 2008). The statistics listed in Table 1 provide more information about these 1.2 million former students.

**Table 1**

- Every 26 seconds, a student leaves school, resulting in more than 1 million American high school students dropping out every year.
- Nearly one-third of all public high school students—and nearly half of all African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans—do not graduate from public high school with their entering class.
- There are nearly 2,000 U.S. high schools in which 40 percent of each freshman class typically drops out by senior year.
- Dropouts are more likely than high school graduates to be unemployed, in poor health, living in poverty, on public assistance, and single parents of children who drop out of high school.
- Dropouts were more than twice as likely as high school graduates to slip into poverty in a given year and three times more likely than college graduates to be unemployed in 2004.
- Dropouts are eight times more likely to be in jail or in prison than high school graduates.
- Dropouts are four times less likely to volunteer than college graduates, are two times less likely to vote in elections or participate in community projects, and represent only three percent of actively engaged citizens in the United States today.

*Source: Grad Nation: A Guidebook to Help Communities Tackle the Dropout Crisis*

Without strategic intervention, the United States' dropout problem will likely continue to increase (Balfanz et al., 2008). While this fact is sobering, researchers have provided substantial information about who drops out and why, what helps students stay on the graduation path, and interventions that have succeeded (Balfanz et al., 2008). They found that students have left school for the reasons shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

- Nearly 70 percent of dropouts said they were not motivated to work hard, and two-thirds would have worked harder if teachers had demanded more of them.
- 70 percent of dropouts, including a majority with low GPAs, were confident that they could have graduated if they had attempted to.
- Approximately one-third of dropouts left school for personal reasons (such as getting a job, becoming a parent, or caring for a family member), while one-third cited "failing in school" as a major factor.
- More than 80 percent of dropouts said that their chances of staying in school would have increased if classes were more interesting and provided opportunities for "real-world learning."
- Four out of five dropouts wanted better teachers, and 75 percent wanted smaller classes with more individualized instruction.
- The majority of dropouts said that higher expectations from teachers and parents and better supervision in the classroom would have helped keep them in school. Most students wanted to build a strong relationship with at least one adult.

*Source: The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*

Research on why young people leave school provides hope. Why? Adolescents admit to areas where interventions could have been made prior to their decision to leave school; they reveal that they largely do not want to drop out of high school; and those who do leave school admit to regretting their decision (Balfanz et al., 2008; Bridgeland et al., 2006). As research projects continue to identify factors that contribute to high school dropout, possible solutions emerge.

### **CHANGING THE APPROACH: APPLYING A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE**

According to numerous research articles, dropout prevention must cease to be a problem of the schools alone. Instead, dropout prevention must become a collaborative effort between the schools and the community (Allensworth & Easton, 2007; Fashola & Slavin, 1997; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998; Smink & Reimer, 2005). Gallagher (1998) writes that when working with youth, “education probably accounts for less than 25 percent of the total effect on whatever the outcome we are trying to achieve.” Although schools have been deemed the primary entity responsible for raising graduation rates, research has shifted to reflect that dropping out of high school is a symptom of larger issues affecting youth (Balfanz et al., 2008; Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2008). Since the issues facing youth are multi-faceted, writings suggest that possible solutions should have a multi-modal approach as well. Solutions should seek to involve family, community, and school (Somers et al., 2008).

In addition to looking beyond just schools, the literature suggests that rather than focus on preventing specific negative behaviors, organizations that serve youth should attempt to develop youth in healthy ways. Thus, instead of striving only to alleviate problem behaviors, researchers advocate building positive characteristics, such as resilience and competency, within youth (Roth et al., 1998). From this shift to a more holistic, active approach to serving youth has come research on programs that specifically target decreasing dropout rates and increasing college attendance (Fashola & Slavin, 1997; Montecel, Cortez, & Cortez, 2007).

However, not just any program achieves the goal of engaging youth in a meaningful way. The rest of this review covers key characteristics, identified in the literature, of organizations that work with youth who may be “at-risk” of dropping out of high school. These characteristics, which align with the youth development perspective, include giving youth ownership, fostering meaningful relationships, seeking parent involvement, connecting students to future goals, giving students strategic skills, and recognizing students for achievement (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Fashola & Slavin, 1997; Grossman, Campell, & Raley, 2007; McLaughlin, 2000; Montecel et al., 2004; Roth et al., 1998).

### **KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAMS THAT SUCCEED AT RETAINING YOUTH**

#### **Youth Ownership**

The literature emphasizes that successful youth programs adopt a changing approach to the dropout “crisis.” That approach should include viewing students as resources rather than as problems to be managed (Roth et al., 1998). In fact, young people will initially walk into a group asking the question, “Will I fit in and will I be comfortable?” (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Part of youth “fitting in” and feeling “comfortable” has to do with youth feeling as though they have a place in that program—as though they have a unique role. Organizations can help youth gain a sense of belonging by giving them responsibilities within that organization (McLaughlin, 2000). According to Grossman (2007), the more input or voice participants feel that they have in shaping an activity that occurs within an

organization, the more likely they are to feel engaged and to enjoy the activity. In fact, psychological development of youth recognizes that “positive development is not something adults do to young people, but rather something that young people do for themselves with a lot of help from parents and others. They are agents of their own development” (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Programs that seek to retain youth should build upon the natural development of adolescents by supporting them in becoming “agents” of their own future.

### **Meaningful Relationships**

As stated above, young people enjoy acting for themselves, but they do so “with a lot of help from parents and others” (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Quality programs preempt potential dropout by offering participants the supports they need to feel safe and reinforced in looking into the future. In a study of key programs that have increased college attendance for Latino students, all programs provided “personalization in which purposeful, meaningful bonds were present between teachers and students” (Fashola & Slavin, 1997). Having just one adult in a student’s life who provides support and is committed to the student’s success improves student school attendance and prevents future dropout (Montecel et al., 2004; Smink & Reimer, 2005). In addition, a study conducted in Chicago revealed that with strong student-teacher relationships, performance in school improves (Allensworth & Easton, 2007). Instructors in after-school settings enjoy a more unique opportunity in that they can forge trusting relationships that resemble friendships (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Youth feel the most connected to adults who allow for informal socializing, learn about youth culture, and take the time to talk with youth when individual needs arise. This type of adult support “is critical to enhancing youth learning and engagement. Youth who experience positive adult support enjoy their experiences more, feel more engaged, and perceive they are learning more than those who experience less adult support” (Grossman et al., 2007).

Thus the literature depicts “supportive relationships [as] critical ‘mediums’ of development. They provide an environment of reinforcement, good modeling, and constructive feedback for physical, intellectual, psychological, and social growth” (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). High-quality programs can offer a caring community and family-like support for students seeking care (McLaughlin, 2000). These relationship supports increase a student’s chances of staying connected to school.

### **Parent Involvement**

Although many programs provide family-like supports within the organization, the literature supports the importance of organizations acknowledging the significance of actual family involvement (Fashola & Slavin, 1997). *The Silent Epidemic* underscores that “the majority [of youth who dropped out] said that higher expectations from teachers and parents . . . would have helped keep them in school” (Bridgeland et al., 2006). In addition, “71 percent of young people surveyed said they felt that one of the keys to keeping students in school was better communication between the parents and the school and increasing parent involvement” (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Organizations can take on the role of connecting parents to what is going on at school. Program staff can serve as liaisons between parents and schools by hosting family events, making phone calls, and planning home visits (Smink & Reimer, 2005). Research shows that when parents are involved in their children’s school lives, “attendance, educational performance, classroom behavior, and emotional well-being improve” (Balfanz et al., 2008).

### **Connection to Future Goals**

The literature reveals that students are more likely to stay in high school when they see that it is relevant to their future. Successful programs help youth perceive the bridge

between high school coursework and future opportunities (Allensworth & Easton, 2007). Programs can orient students toward their goals in strategic ways. For example, college-oriented programs can provide students with college counseling, take them to college fairs, and arrange college campus tours. Successful programs utilize these activities because they make goals more tangible for students (Fashola & Slavin, 1997). *The Silent Epidemic* notes that a number of studies have stated “that clarifying the links between school and getting a job may convince more students to stay in school” (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

### **Strategic Skills**

Programs that engage youth and maintain high attendance rates teach these young people specific skills. The literature reveals that effective organizations for youth tend to have a specific focus. In fact, many community-based organizations promote learning as a reason for youth to get involved (McLaughlin, 2000). That learning can focus on dancing, art, writing, or acquiring general study skills. At college-preparation programs, learning typically focuses on academic skills, such as test-taking strategies, writing, or preparing for the SATs (Fashola & Slavin, 1997). Whatever the focus, youth get to develop a new skill or hone an existing one. As *The Silent Epidemic* states, “nearly 70 percent of dropouts said they were not motivated to work hard, and two-thirds would have worked harder if more had been demanded of them” (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Sound programming and strong program leaders attend to this need and build organizations that have a clear focus and high-quality content that pushes young people beyond a level they once thought possible (McLaughlin, 2000). More than 80 percent of the former students surveyed for *The Silent Epidemic* said that their chances of staying in school would have risen “if classes were more interesting and provided opportunities for real-world learning” (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Engaging programs respond to this reality by crafting activities that involve active participation and challenges that allow youth to be involved in “idea generation and implementation” (Roth et al., 1998).

### **Feedback and Recognition**

Finally, the literature overwhelmingly shows that successful organizations give students consistent feedback and recognition when students succeed (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Fashola & Slavin, 1997; McLaughlin, 2000; Smink & Reimer, 2005). Programs concerned with creating a college-going culture often recognize students for academic achievement (Fashola & Slavin, 1997). In addition to providing incentives when students do well, organizational leaders also provide feedback on areas in which students could improve. Programs also use rewards for behavior management and to increase motivation (Grossman et al., 2007). Research shows that verbal reinforcement, such as praise and encouragement, increases motivation. Giving “regular feedback on progress” allows students to “understand what they know and what they still need to learn and master” (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Feedback can take a variety of forms and plays an important role in learning and growth for young people (McLaughlin, 2000).

## Research Methods

### METHOD 1: INTERVIEWS WITH ORGANIZATIONS

#### Background Information

For our interviews, Boys and Girls Club identified four academic support organizations as successful at retaining high school students. These organizations share the mission of helping students achieve a college education. They target students who hope to succeed academically but face a variety of challenges in school—such as being the first in the family to pursue higher education, being the only student of color in a college-prep class, or having received low grades or test scores. They also all target students who come from populations that are typically under-represented in four-year colleges.

These organizations have varying missions, scopes, and institutional structures, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

	<b>AVID</b>	<b>BUILD</b>	<b>Eastside</b>	<b>FCE</b>
<b>Mission</b>	To get youth from populations that are under-represented in four-year colleges into AP classes and into college	To ensure that youth excel in education, lead in their communities, and succeed professionally	To prepare youth for college eligibility and support them academically and socially as they strive for college success	To help youth attend and graduate from college
<b>Primary Offerings</b>	In-school AVID class	In-school entrepreneurship elective and college prep	Full day-school offerings	Study space, tutoring, mentoring, and college planning
<b>Students Targeted</b>	Students in grades 4–12	Students in grades 9–12, especially those who have disengaged from academics	Students in grades 6–12	Students in grades 9–12
<b>Structure</b>	Non-profit that runs centers in thousands of schools in the US and beyond	Non-profit that teaches a class in 3 high schools in East Palo Alto, Oakland, and Washington, DC	Independent school in East Palo Alto	Non-profit with on-site academic support center

*Sources: All information in the table come from the interviews conducted with organization representatives.*

#### Procedures

We designed the interviews to elicit the practitioner perspective on successful strategies for engaging youth in academic support programs and retaining them in school. For each organization, we conducted an interview in person, over the phone, or in writing with one or two key program staff. They were:

- John Giambruno, Menlo-Atherton AVID Coordinator/Teacher and Lara Gill, Menlo-Atherton AVID Teacher
- Chantal Laurie, West Coast Regional Program Director at BUILD
- Helen Kim, Vice Principal at Eastside College Preparatory School
- Anna Waring, Executive Director of FCE

We have included their contact information in Appendix A.

We used a consistent protocol across organizations; interviewers added follow-up questions as reasonable. Appendix B includes our interview questions.

We have reported our key findings from the interview in the Research Results section of this paper. The Conclusion section includes recommendations based on these findings.

## **METHOD 2: FOCUS GROUPS WITH YOUTH**

### **Background Information**

We conducted two focus groups with high school students. These independent focus groups included:

- nine BGCP youth and one BGCP alumna who is now a staff member
- seven FCE youth

In both cases, some youth have been members of the program for less than a year, while others have been members for many years. Both focus groups included male and female students.

### **Procedures**

We designed the focus groups to elicit the youth perspective on successful strategies for engaging youth in academic support programs and retaining them in school. We conducted each focus group in person at the program site.

We used a consistent protocol (that differed from the one used with organizations) with both focus groups; again, interviewers added follow-up questions as reasonable. Appendix C includes our focus group questions.

We have also reported our key findings from the focus groups in the Research Results section of this paper. The Conclusion section includes recommendations based on these findings.

## **Research Results**

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Our interviews with representatives from AVID, BUILD, Eastside College Preparatory School, and Foundation for a College Education revealed an array of best practices, as would be expected from organizations diverse in mission and structure. Nonetheless, the research provided data similar enough for us to pinpoint themes in organizational approach and experience. Here we group these themes into three broad sections: in the first, we explore key structural elements to put in place when building an academic support program; in the second, we reflect on the complexities of the program in motion, considering both the challenges and opportunities it may face; and, finally, we assess the impact of a successful program. We have incorporated the voices of youth, collected in separate focus groups with FCE and BGCP students, throughout the results. The youth generally corroborated ideas and strategies discussed by organizations, creating a cohesive dialogue between the two perspectives.

### **BUILDING AN ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAM: KEY STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS**

Interested students, prepared staff, and solid relationships with other key players in the students' lives are the most basic and essential components of the four organizations we studied. These three elements together determine the health of student programs. Programs succeed at targeting and recruiting an engaged student base when they capitalize on existing connections in the community. Student engagement increases as strong bonds form with staff members. Reliable relationships with families and schools open up new resources and opportunities for developing programs. Below, we detail key findings related to recruitment and selection of students, ideal roles for and characteristics of program staff, and the nature of organizational ties to other community players, such as families and schools.

#### **Winning Student Interest**

The four organizations we interviewed use a variety of methods to recruit students. All rely on area middle schools and other local youth-serving agencies as sites for holding regular information sessions. In addition, AVID, a program housed within schools, draws on access to academic records—by requesting teacher recommendations and student test scores—to identify potential participants. BUILD partners with COMPASS<sup>1</sup> to identify eligible candidates, while Eastside participates in the high school fair at the Boys and Girls Club and holds two open-house events on its own campus each fall. BUILD, FCE, and Eastside also underscore the power of cultivating a strong reputation; they emphasize that word of mouth within existing social networks, though a less tangible tool than other recruitment strategies, has been effective at drawing students to their programs. An FCE student highlighted the power of such networking when he told us, “I joined because my brother was in [FCE] last year. . . [at first] I didn’t have the grades but everyone encouraged me to join again because I was doing better.” Previous family ties to the program and a general awareness of program benefits within the student’s community lead to sustained student interest (as well as indirect program promotion).

We also found that the four organizations highlight different aspects of their student programs when conducting marketing and recruitment campaigns. AVID stresses the academic support it offers, while BUILD emphasizes its opportunities for youth-directed entrepreneurship, and Eastside simply encourages students to select the high school that meets their individual needs and desires.

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<sup>1</sup> COMPASS is a summer program that prepares students from East Palo Alto for high school during the summer before ninth grade.

The youth we interviewed offered additional insights on the appeal of college preparation programs. Students recognized these organizations as outlets for their peers to be “active and safe and have fun” (BGCP) and “to look into the future” (FCE). Students also expressed a pointed desire to participate in program outreach. One male BGCP student expressed to us the following wish: “There should be a way that we can talk to other people who aren’t doing so good in school. We could talk to those kids about the activities and have them try to come here so they can go where we’re going.” Because these students understand the concerns, preferences, and challenges of fellow students and are willing to help in the marketing process, we believe they are indispensable authors and vessels of recruitment messages.

### **Selecting Students for the Program**

Once a student has heard about the program and demonstrated interest in participating, organizations described a range of approaches to selecting students for admittance (see Column A of Results Chart 1 in Appendix D). While FCE and Eastside require a high level of initial parental involvement, a stated student desire to attend, and recommendations from teachers, BUILD takes students on a first-come, first-serve basis, which requires much less from the student, family, and school at the outset. Both AVID and FCE acknowledge the value of creating a threshold for entry into the program; they believe this strategy to be effective because it yields a high program retention rate. As well, all four organizations tend to look for certain student attitudes; they consider the willingness to achieve academically and to engage in all facets of the program important. Overall, we found that programs attained the greatest success in the selection of appropriate students when they established realistic criteria in advance and then projected consistent standards for students remaining in the program.

Standards and expectations for students in each program vary slightly with program goals (see Column B of Results Chart 1 in Appendix D). In most cases, students must satisfy certain academic requirements, which may include earning certain grades or taking specific courses. Students must also participate in all required aspects of the program, such as attending regular tutoring sessions or meetings with advisers. Programs track student compliance with requirements using a variety of methods (see Column C of Results Chart 1 in Appendix D). This tracking is usually assigned to a specific program staff member charged with individual knowledge of and responsibility for a given student.

Across the board, organizations set real consequences for failure to meet these expectations. At AVID, BUILD, and FCE, students who fail to meet standards for a full term are placed on probation, which typically means engaging in extra tutoring, weekly progress report checks, family conferences, and more frequent meetings with program teachers. FCE Executive Director Anna Waring defends high program expectations as a way to honor the original commitment and intent of her students: “I don’t think students are served well when they think they are doing well and they are not really,” she says. An FCE student testified that, in her mind, probation simply means “more support.” She continued, “[The staff] help you out with your grades and you actually get help on the areas that you need help on. And the whole thing with saying you go on probation if you go below a 2.5 [GPA], that is real encouraging to get your grades up.” In all four organizations, we found a sincere willingness among staff to support struggling students. In addition, each program professed a desire to re-admit those youth who have left the organization for a time as long as the students shows evidence of renewed effort. Programs that have left a door open to once disengaged students found that many students have returned after time off and have frequently demonstrated an ability to again participate in the program.

### **Preparing the Staff to Succeed with Students**

The success of a program hinges on the skills and devotion of its staff. We found that the most valuable teachers and advisers, coaches, tutors, and directors are highly attuned to the needs of their individual students, willing to advocate for them in schools and spend time with their families. The delegation of these duties, typically as part of a case management or academic coaching approach, seemed to encourage the establishment of an overarching network among student, staff, school, and family. Students want to work with staff members who are genuine in their authority and their compassion: “It’s really about the staff member and if we can relate to them. We know when they act like that because it’s their job. We want them to act like that because they really want to be helping us,” a female BGCP student remarked. Furthermore, students expressed affinity for staff members who build strong connections with them. “I give my respect to the staff that really know me,” another female BGCP youth stated.

### **Building Relationships with Other Players in Students’ Lives**

The organizations we interviewed generally take a holistic view of the programs they offer. That is, they consider it essential to build relationships with all players in students’ lives. Helen Kim, Eastside’s Vice Principal, explained the school’s theory of relationship-building like this: “The teachers, administrators, advisers, and parents form a network of support for students. With constant communication among all the adults in the students’ lives from all fronts, we are able to increase our effectiveness.” A student at FCE also acknowledged the benefits of strong communication within such a network, and he has even recommended the strategy to his peers: “I tell [my friends] it is good to have your parents involved with your situation because otherwise you won’t get much support with college and to looking forward. . . . I try to encourage them to try to get into a program like that if they can’t get into this one.” Overall, we found that establishing communication with family members and relationships with principals and teachers bolstered program success in providing student support.

## **THE PROGRAM IN MOTION: IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES**

Certain hurdles inevitably arise once a program is up and running. Our research uncovered both honest explanations of potential obstacles and insightful thoughts on how best to overcome them. This section first describes a series of common challenges that individual students as well as entire programs face. It then details retention strategies and core program elements that help keep students connected to the program.

### **Obstacles to Staying in the Program**

Given the multitude of influences that shape the daily reality of today’s youth, we were not surprised to hear that significant factors at times interfere with students’ commitment to a college-preparation program. We found that chief among the reasons for students’ sporadic participation were logistical and circumstantial conflicts, including lack of transportation, family obligations, and a waning sense of self-motivation or increasing sense of self-doubt as high school graduation draws near. AVID has observed this trend toward “self-sabotaging at the end” (L. Gill, personal communication, October 16, 2008). BUILD noted that both scheduling conflicts with other school classes and simply not being excited about starting a business sometimes prevent students from staying in its program. Eastside finds that students occasionally pull out of the school because they realize that they are not suited to the small and intimate culture or because the program lacks certain opportunities that larger high schools offer. FCE students discussed feeling overly tired after sports and other recreational activities and struggling to balance outside

jobs with time spent at the program. Students at BGCP identified occasionally experiencing boredom and general interest in staying at home on a particular day as potential deterrents.

Programs work to combat these challenges at the individual student level. They simultaneously contend with social pressures, financial constraints, and issues of staffing. Organizations battle against the common notion that remaining cool and socially connected preclude the need to do well in school, which they find can be particularly determinative of male students' program-related decisions. At FCE, the emergent strategy for counter-acting such conflicts is one of impressing upon students their individual ability to make a difference for their larger demographic:

We will have speakers helping them understand how race and gender play out. And not to add an excessive amount of pressure on them but to help them understand, this is a state where one out of four Latino and African American kids have A through G requirements. So they have a particular extra level of responsibility. (Anna Waring, personal communication, October 23, 2008)

At BUILD, staff members instill in the students the understanding that failure is a normal part of the entrepreneurial experience, which eases the pressure to succeed at getting accepted to college. Additional challenges that organizations mentioned include coordination of AVID teachers and regular school teachers, Eastside's desire to serve a wide range of students with various work habits, students' academic preparedness and needs, and concerns about fundraising for sustainability and expansion.

### **Opportunities for Keeping Youth Connected**

Despite all these challenges, we found an array of strategies for keeping youth connected and ensuring long-term organizational stability that either are in place now or can be culled from a rich body of suggestions.

*Structural Strategies* Many of these strategies entail operationalizing straightforward structural components. For example, one female BGCP student noted that especially on "Friday nights they [the BGCP staff] need to help the kids with a way home." Attention to simple logistical details like this can increase student attendance.

In the academic realm, we found several successful retention strategies. Eastside works with its students to draw up tangible plans for staying in school and thereby completing the college preparation program. FCE reminds its youth of the commitment they have already made to going to college and underscores the belief that "high expectations lead to high achievement" (Anna Waring, personal communication, October 23, 2008). Meanwhile, AVID notes a clear increase in student confidence gained from engaging in Socratic Seminars and therefore pours program energy into building learning strategies and critical-thinking skills in the AVID classroom. BGCP students themselves told us that they value having more information and would particularly like to have more information about A–G requirements.

A third theme in retention tools is the provision of rewards, incentives, and positive reinforcements for students' completion of assigned tasks. Three of the four organizations send students on college visits. AVID promises students its signature blue sash at graduation. BUILD offers mid-year and end-of-year parties and encourages staff members to make frequent positive phone calls home. BGCP students expressed that movie outings, Jamba Juice gift cards, and increased privileges around the Clubhouse would be appreciated rewards.

Finally, we found some key traits that programs look for in order to hire an appropriate staff. FCE, for example, employs staff members who are willing to spend a lot of time acting as independent education counselors and to highly personalize their interactions with students. BGCP students stated an interest in staff members who come from or understand their community, talk to them respectfully, advocate for them in school, and help them with their studies.

*Program Culture Strategies* Along with structural strategies, we found areas of program culture that, through intentional cultivation, can foster overall success. Organizations retain students when they allow for student voice, build a community among program participants, and extend communication to all parties interested in a student's wellbeing.

BUILD encourages student leadership by asking older youth to be volunteer mentors or partake in other role-modeling opportunities. Students at BGCP expressed interest in similar mentoring arrangements or even a youth advisory board. A female BGCP student described her suggestions:

I would have a meeting every Friday or Monday and ask the teens what they want to do the next week. Give the teens one day out of the week when they do come and help the little kids so the little kids know they have something to do with them. I would have more programs for the teens, like a Teen Night made by the teens.

Programs employ other strategies to build community among their participants, recognizing the power of peer buy-in and the cohesiveness that comes with group engagement. AVID acknowledges the support that only students can give to one another, especially in AP classes in which they are the only students of color. AVID teachers also make sure students know that the AVID classroom is a welcoming and supportive environment that they can return to even if they leave at some point. FCE students request more group social events and study breaks. A female FCE student cited the role that SPACE meetings<sup>2</sup> play in giving students a place where they can “get to know each other more and . . . get closer.” Similarly, a male BGCP student reflected, “If College Bound can become like a family, and we can get more people in it, then we're all gonna come here and then we'll get to college.” Clearly, networks of support among program participants, teachers, and their families are crucial to the longevity and strength of a program.

## **ASSESSING A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM'S IMPACT ON STUDENTS**

We conclude our findings section with a gesture forward. Throughout our research, we heard much about student skill development in academic programs, and we learned about student hopes and aspirations. This portion of results lends validity to the project of growing an academic support program. It also outlines a possible agenda for expansion as a program matures.

### **The Long-Term Benefits of Academic Support Programs**

When we inquired whether staff members see differences in long-term and short-term members of a program, organization representatives listed a variety of positive attributes and patterns that they observe in participants who have been with the program a long

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<sup>2</sup> SPACE stands for Students and Parents for a College Education. SPACE meetings occur once a month. All students must attend with at least one family member.

time. Over time, Eastside detects academic growth in students who master work habits and timely work completion and develop intellectual engagement and pursuits beyond assigned coursework. FCE sees burgeoning student confidence and self-awareness. At BUILD, there is a palpable change in students' self-expectations and sense of personal responsibility. Exemplifying these trends, the following anecdote relays the sharpening of BUILD students' ability to think entrepreneurially over the years of the program:

One group of third year students opted to sell Obama t-shirts with the slogan "Go Green: Eat More Barackolli" as their business endeavor. At their final sale, students' available t-shirts were size XL or XXL, in line with fashion trends and preferences for the students' own demographic. However, they were selling primarily to adults. Students found that the limited sizing did not match the desires of these customers, so they recorded the interest and later ordered more appropriate sizes. One member of this group lamented the extra inventory: "Don't say it, I know it, these are the challenges of an entrepreneur, we'll figure it out." Because he had a grasp of the creative business process, he was able to understand these obstacles as opportunities instead. (Chantal Laurie, personal communication, October 21, 2008)

Whereas ninth grade students are initially resistant to the business model, advanced BUILD students assume ownership over tools such as trial and error, perseverance, and project completion in both business and college preparation. Overall, the more years youth spend in a given program, the more self-assured, responsible, and skilled they become.

### **Formulating Plans for the Future**

All the students we spoke with had diverse and admirable future goals. Some envisioned themselves as professionals—lawyers, nurses, or engineers; others hope to travel internationally, exercise decision-making in starting a family, or continue to explore work and education options. We did, however, discern an interesting difference in the way youth in our focus groups articulate future goals. Students at FCE, an established college-preparation program, had the knowledge and vocabulary to discuss college entrance exams, individual programs of study at post-secondary institutions, and concerns about financial aid. Students participating in the emergent College Bound program at BGCP, however, were less certain about both the ability of college programs to fit their interests and their personal drive to achieve. A student at FCE demonstrated how much she understands about the college experience when she said this: "Right now I am considering [studying] psychology. I want to study abroad in Europe, either Spain or Italy, that is one of my dreams." BGCP youth currently use less accurate terminology about the elements of the college experience and seem less aware that certain careers require graduate study as well as a college education. Programs that afford students the jargon associated with going to college and pursuing a career allow youth to make more specific and realizable future plans.

### **Expanding an Academic Support Program Over Time**

We heard a few straightforward guidelines for continuing the growth of a college preparation program. First, summer time is a relatively untouched period during which students could maintain their academic engagement and learn much about the college application process. In each focus group, only two students had participated in any structured summer enrichment last year. Furthermore, these students who are engaged and involved throughout the school year are willing to extend participation to the summer. Finally, FCE offers an example of an organization that sustains relationships with its students as they enter, navigate, and complete college. FCE notes that college-

going students often fail to complete the transition to four-year schools once they begin attending community colleges. To support its college students, the program administers goody bags freshman year, tracks enrollment, and requests that these students attend college fairs for the program's current high school students. FCE has succeeded in looping several alumni back into the program as full-time staff, tutors, or mentors. In sum, expanding the program to offer summer sessions or college-level support may be viable options.

## **Recommendations and Conclusion**

Synthesizing the data on dropout prevention that we collected from literature, interviews, and focus groups leads us to recommend to the Boys and Girls Club a framework that uses the youth development approach as a guiding principle and the themes of establishing a program structure, confronting the challenges of an operational program, and assessing program impact as functional ways of implementing it. Below we have outlined a set of recommendations, grouped by theme and organized into the same categories we used in Research Results, that we draw from our findings. We hope these recommendations will be useful to BGCP as it continues to shape College Bound.

### **BUILDING AN ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAM: KEY STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS**

#### **Winning Student Interest**

- Decide who to target; define what it means to be a good “fit” for College Bound
- Market effectively: identify local youth-serving organizations at which you can hold information sessions about College Bound; present at community-wide events; offer an open house
- Solicit teacher recommendations for potential College Bound participants
- Encourage word-of-mouth recruitment through the social networks of existing members
- Consider formally enlisting the help of current youth participants in marketing College Bound
- Draft a list of primary marketing messages:
  - Advertise ways in which the program extends beyond academic support if it does so
  - Highlight any specific skill-building opportunities
  - Emphasize other possible advantages like safety, community-building, and general fun

As good news, none of the organizations we researched mentioned having trouble recruiting participants. In fact, while the four organizations we interviewed use different recruitment methods and focus on different aspects of their programs when marketing them, they consistently cited current or former program participants as their most powerful recruiting force. We recommend finding a combination of recruitment strategies that are a good match for the program and also revisiting these strategies as the program matures. We view the goal of recruitment and marketing as being able to articulate the need in the community that the program is striving to meet and to draw in the youth who have that need. We find it hopeful that our research revealed no shortage of adolescents willing to engage in unique youth programs.

#### **Selecting Students for the Program**

- Require at least a basic level of family member involvement in College Bound
- Check for individual student motivation to participate in College Bound
- Assess certain academic criteria such as GPA, teacher recommendations, and/or test scores
- Require students to participate in multiple aspects of College Bound, such as weekly tutoring sessions, program-wide meetings, advising appointments, special events, financial aid workshops, and SAT-prep sessions
- Set and enforce clear, consistent program standards and expectations, such as a GPA threshold per term and/or a minimum number of AP courses taken by each

- students, that align with preparing BGCP youth for success in college
- Set procedures for tracking student progress toward attaining standards and goals; build information pathways with schools to receive regular information about students
- Design real consequences for student failure to meet standards and expectations but recognize this failure as an indicator that they need more supports
- Offer ways for students to re-engage in College Bound if they leave it for a time; be as flexible as possible when working with struggling students

Creating selection criteria and setting program requirements and expectations appear to be foundational decisions for all the organizations we researched. Although standards and expectations vary in these organizations, they tend to answer the following questions: *What specific standards do we want to set so we know we are pushing students to excel? What standards do we believe are appropriate for participants to maintain in order to increase potential for future college success? How will we encourage and push students toward meeting our expectations, and how will we monitor whether they are doing so? Finally, how will we respond when participants fail to meet expectations?* We recommend these questions as useful guiding questions for College Bound as well. We also want to highlight that one common selection criterion used by these organizations is youth motivation; they all select young people who are willing to engage in the struggle to reach a goal, no matter the challenges. These organizations also leave little ambiguity about what they expect from program participants, which is another approach we recommend for College Bound. We also want to note that all these organizations have worked with youth who struggle to meet expectations. They all strive to stand alongside youth who need help to reach a goal. If the youth could not benefit from that help, they would likely not attend the program. Thus, organizations draw a hard line on expectations and yet offer much grace in helping youth meet them, which we recommend as well to College Bound.

### **Preparing the Staff to Succeed with Students**

- Encourage College Bound staff to build caring and supportive relationships to aid in student retention
- Continue using case managers and academic coaches or tutors so that every student receives direct attention
- Implement other means of personalizing College Bound for each participant
- Question potential staff hires about how committed they are to student success
- Select College Bound staff members who may be willing to step in as a family-like support

The organizations we researched are only as powerful as the people who work in them. The relationships and support that students find in these organizations are what keep them coming back. The importance for program success of having qualified and committed staff cannot be overemphasized. Staff members are clearly the crux of successful youth programs. We recommend that College Bound staff be able to wear many hats—as advocates, advisors, coaches, mentors, directors, and friends, to name a few. Ideal staff will use a personalized approach in which they serve youth in any or all of these roles, on an individually determined basis. In addition, we recommend that College Bound staff strive to balance authority and affection.

### **Building Relationships with Other Players in Students' Lives**

- Strive to build a comprehensive network of support, including teachers, administrators, advisors, and parents, for each College Bound student
- Maintain communication with family members through positive phone calls, home visits, one-on-one meetings, and family events
- Build relationships with principals and teachers from the schools the College Bound

- students attend
- Collaborate with other local organizations that serve a similar youth population and have similar goals
- Serve as a liaison between the parents and the schools

The literature and our findings revealed that the larger the safety net for students, the greater the benefit. Program staff are aware of the various players youth encounter in a day, including those in their family life, school life, and academic programs. Students benefit from programs that work to strengthen ties among these stakeholders in students' lives, for this allows what could be a fragmented set of student supports to come together on behalf of the students' success. Thus we recommend that College Bound attempt to build such ties. And by doing so, program staff may be able to access information and documents, such as report cards and transcripts, that are integral components of monitoring student success. In addition, as we conducted our research, these other organizations in the community revealed a willingness to collaborate. While maintaining connections to outside organizations can take time and effort, the effort seems to directly benefit students. Thus we recommend that College Bound consider building contacts with other local organizations that serve a similar student population and have similar goals.

## **THE PROGRAM IN MOTION: IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES**

### **Opportunities for Keeping Youth Connected**

#### *Structural Strategies*

- Focus first on maintaining high attendance rates
- Pay attention to logistical issues, such as transportation, when designing College Bound hours, requirements, and events
- Maintain communication with students' families to mitigate conflicts and to understand any external factors that may make regular attendance difficult for youth
- Offer informational workshops or facilitated discussions around cultural views to combat the notion, held especially by teenage boys, that it isn't cool to go to college
- Offer a variety of activities (social, service, recreational) to maintain student interest and engage youth with different learning styles and activity preferences
- Devise specific non-academic tasks for students that aim to build confidence or cultivate other skills helpful in the college-application process
- Provide frequent feedback that recognizes student achievement and makes students aware of areas for improvement and strength
- Offer rewards and incentives, such as field trips, college visits, movie nights, Jamba Juice gift cards, or added Clubhouse privileges, to aid in student retention
- Remind students that the significance of their academic achievement extends beyond them as individuals—they can be role models or trend setters for other students in their demographic
- Ask the question, "What specific skills are our students walking away from College Bound having gained?" and incorporate in the program the teaching of study skills, critical-thinking skills, and real-world problem-solving skills that students will need to be successful in college and beyond

It is important to recognize that keeping youth connected to a program is not something that just happens. As youth may confront numerous forces that pull them away from

programs, they must also have forces pulling them back in. We recommend anticipating the potential and legitimate outside forces that may keep youth from staying committed to the program and, to the greatest extent possible, building into College Bound's structure ways to reduce obstacles for students. For example, if transportation is a challenge for students, coordinate a pick-up and drop-off van for special events. We also recommend that program staff make intentional and efficient use of the time they have with youth, structuring programs so that students have time to hone specific skills as well as receive consistent feedback on both victories and areas that need improvement.

### *Program Culture Strategies*

- View students as resources and agents in their own future
- Give students options and voice so they can make College Bound their own; this could include letting students choose daily activities and also giving youth an opportunity to give feedback and make recommendations concerning the program
- Offer youth leadership opportunities, such as a role on a youth advisory board, the ability to plan special events, or the chance to be a mentor to younger students
- Communicate about appropriate time and space for youth input in order to create an environment in which youth are fully knowledgeable about their unique role within the organization
- Balance giving individual attention with community-building
- Instill a sense of shared purpose among participants by emphasizing the shared goal of finishing a program project or going to college
- Create a reflective culture with time and processes for students to verbalize and commit to goals

Culture means "the way we do things around here." We recommend gathering your team to discuss ways to create a unique culture specifically tailored to College Bound staff and youth. In addition, we offer some overarching recommendations based on common cultural characteristics of the youth organizations we studied. First and foremost, in keeping with the youth development framework, we recommend establishing an organizational culture that makes clear that youth are far from being problems that need fixing and are rather valuable resources and active agents in constructing their own futures. College Bound can honor this foundational belief by giving students ownership and a sense of belonging in the program. Building such a culture requires a delicate balance between giving the individual attention and a voice and actively creating opportunities for youth to come together as a supportive community.

## **ASSESSING A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM'S IMPACT ON STUDENTS**

### **The Long-Term Benefits of Academic Support Programs**

- Encourage students to attend College Bound for all years of high school
- Emphasize to students that academic improvement and college readiness take time; remind them that the more semesters they spend in College Bound, the more confident, responsible, and skilled they will become

### **Formulating Plans for the Future**

- Explicitly and consistently connect current activities to students' future goals
- Help students make their future goals as tangible as possible; this can be done by offering them access to guest speakers from colleges, college fairs, college counseling, college campus tours, career planning, career shadowing, career interviews, and career and college research
- Make sure students know what it takes to reach their goals—for example, if a

students want to become a doctor, be sure he or she knows that this requires studying beyond college, how long that takes, and what kind of degree that graduate work provides

- Give students the vocabulary to talk intelligently about higher education, such as: *FAFSA, financial aid, in-state tuition, work-study, major, concentration, hours, units, semesters/quarters/terms, GPA, study abroad, undergraduate, Bachelor's degree, graduate school, Master's degree, Ph.D., M.D., J.D., M.B.A.*

### **Expanding an Academic Support Program Over Time**

- Consider using the summer as a time to keep students meaningfully engaged
- Consider extending services to students after they graduate from high school; decide whether College Bound aims to get them *to* college or *through* college

Just as students need reminders of the difference between their short-term reality and long-term goals, program staff may want to keep in mind that youth development is indeed a process. As encouragement for the College Bound staff on this front, we want to highlight that the organizations we interviewed admitted to encountering bumps along the way with some students but shared that they see visible differences between students who stick with the program for the long haul and those who don't. In light of this, we make the following recommendations for aiding youth in thinking about the big picture. First, we suggest frequently having participants answer the question, "Why are we doing this?" Youth are more likely to engage in an activity when they understand how it contributes to the future. As well, we recommend working with students to develop realistic views of their future. Organization leaders suggested that students understand a goal better when programs give them a taste of the tangible reward. For example, college visits and college student panels give students a clear image of what they are working toward. In addition, we recommend teaching students the language that they need to intelligently talk about their college-going goal and what it will take to get there. We suggest that College Bound should not take for granted that young people know the distinctions between community colleges, public universities, and private universities or the array of types of graduate or training schools. Finally, as College Bound grows, we recommend extending its services by taking advantage of summer breaks and offering support to program participants beyond high school graduation. While the day-to-day activities are crucial, it is important for both students and staff to balance them with a vision for the future.

## **Conclusion**

The research and recommendations presented in this paper reflect current practices, strategies, and challenges identified in the literature and by four academic support organizations—AVID, BUILD, Eastside College Preparatory School, and the Foundation for a College Education. We encourage BGCP to consult our findings and suggestions as it continues to shape its College Bound program. Much of the success that we heard about and observed within the model organizations already resembles the youth

development framework. We believe that further attention to the youth development philosophy may enhance networks of community relationships and result in a positive environment for individual student growth—a primary means of honoring diverse groups of young people.

Within the youth development perspective, we have outlined several avenues by which College Bound can establish core values and program infrastructure, manage the program's operation in spite of inevitable challenges, and turn attention to the program's impact and areas for future growth. We encourage BGCP to follow up on these conversations with nearby organizations in acknowledgment of their shared goal of supporting young people on the Peninsula in their pursuit of continued education using the best possible resources.

In closing, we would like to applaud the energy and initiative that BGCP is already pouring into College Bound. We see a strong correlation between the existing program and the recommendations we have outlined. We anticipate continued high quality programming from BGCP in the future.

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## Appendices

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### APPENDIX A Contact Information for Organization Representatives

#### Contacts at AVID

- *John Giambruno, Menlo-Atherton AVID Coordinator/Teacher* •
- *Lara Gill, Menlo-Atherton AVID Teacher* •

business address: Menlo-Atherton High School  
555 Middlefield Road  
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#### Contact at BUILD

- *Chantal Laurie, West Coast Regional Program Director* •

business address: 1600 Adams Drive  
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#### Contact at Eastside College Preparatory School

- *Helen Kim, Vice Principal* •

business address: 1041 Myrtle Street  
East Palo Alto, CA 94303

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650-688-0850 ext. 100 (main)

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#### Contact at FCE

- *Anna Waring, Executive Director* •

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650-322-5048 (main)

email: awaring@collegefoundation.org

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interview Questions for Organizations**

- What is your organization's mission or philosophy?
- What criteria and process do you use to select students for your program?
- Once students are in the program, what types of standards do you have for them?
- How do you determine who your "active" members are?
- Are you tracking whether your students are on pace to graduate, and if so, how?
- What about their lives enables vulnerable students to stay connected to your program?
- What specific activities and methods do you use to engage vulnerable students? That is, what are your greatest retention tools and practices?
- What are your organization's retention rates?
- What do you think prevents students from staying in your program? Are there any particular warning signs, specific behaviors, or patterns that you have noticed?
- Do you notice any differences between long-term and short-term members of your programs?
- Where does your organization face the greatest challenges for youth? (i.e. their vulnerabilities)
- Where does your organization face the greatest challenges in working with youth? (programmatic aspects such as money, staff)

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Focus Group Questions for Youth**

- What did you do this summer related to FCE/BGCP?
- Imagine you are talking to a friend who does not come to FCE/BGCP. How do you describe your involvement here to that person?
- When and why did you join FCE/BGCP?
- What do you gain from coming here?
- What keeps you coming back regularly? (How might friends, family, or feelings of personal belonging/responsibility affect this?)
- Which FCE/BGCP programs are most important to your academic life?
- Is there anything in your life that makes it hard for you to come here? Anything that pulls you away? (For example, you might want to think about whether your friends are part of the program or not and how that influences your being here.)
- Where do you imagine yourself in five years? What does your life look like in the future? What are the challenges that you foresee?
- What would you change about FCE/BGCP if you were the boss? Is there anything in the regular programs that could work better for you? What about during the summer?
- We've talked about FCE/BGCP a lot today, and we've really enjoyed hearing your ideas and opinions. Is there anything else that you would like to ask or to say about FCE/BGCP?

**APPENDIX D  
Results Chart 1**

	<b>A. Selection Process and Criteria</b>	<b>B. Standards and Expectations</b>	<b>C. Tracking Participant Progress</b>
<b>AVID</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets students with low GPA and high test scores</li> <li>• Appreciate teacher recommendations but do not require them</li> <li>• Interviews students for motivation, willingness to follow program standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain minimum 2.0 GPA</li> <li>• Engage in AVID curriculum: attend Socratic Seminars and tutorial, keep Cornell notes and AVID binder</li> <li>• Enroll in one AP course in both grades 11 and 12</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student charts fulfillment of A–G requirements each term</li> <li>• AVID teachers review semester transcripts and UC eligibility for each student</li> <li>• AVID teacher contacts students' school counselors and teachers</li> </ul>
<b>BUILD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operates on first-come, first-served basis</li> <li>• Uses an application form</li> <li>• Requires no teacher recommendation</li> <li>• Has no GPA requirement</li> <li>• Requires applicants to show willingness to re-engage in program and school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain minimum 2.0 GPA in grade 10; 2.5 GPA in grade 11</li> <li>• Behave professionally</li> <li>• Adhere to Student Guiding Principles of respect, initiative, passion, and perseverance</li> <li>• Attend weekly mentor or Incubator sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff collect student transcripts</li> <li>• Students meet with college advisers at least once a year</li> <li>• Academic Program Managers review individual grades and hold family conferences</li> <li>• Staff track BUILD scores (qualitative assessments of student effort)</li> </ul>
<b>Eastside</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considers grades and test scores</li> <li>• Has no GPA requirement</li> <li>• Requires teacher recommendations</li> <li>• Evaluates parent education and family financial information</li> <li>• Has students and parents fill out written application</li> <li>• Has applicants shadow students</li> <li>• Requires applicants to show a desire to attend</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enroll in all college prep courses: four years of math, science, English, history and social science, Spanish</li> <li>• Complete homework</li> <li>• Pass each class with minimum C-</li> <li>• Complete regular self-assessments to gauge progress toward school-wide expected learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisers monitor student progress in grades and homework completion</li> <li>• Staff meet weekly to discuss individual student work</li> <li>• Staff hold parent conferences at least every semester</li> </ul>
<b>FCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruits in grades 9 &amp; 10</li> <li>• Requires minimum 2.5 GPA</li> <li>• Requires one teacher recommendation</li> <li>• Requires applicants to have a family member present at a program information session</li> <li>• Requires student interest in going to college</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain minimum 2.5 GPA</li> <li>• Take at least 4 AP courses</li> <li>• Attend academic excellence tutoring</li> <li>• Keep portfolio of college info</li> <li>• Bring family member to SPACE meetings</li> <li>• Attend financial aid seminar</li> <li>• Attend East Palo Alto College Fair</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff collect transcripts from school or family contacts every term</li> <li>• Staff meet with students to design course schedule</li> <li>• Staff meet with school faculty as necessary to ensure students are placed correctly</li> <li>• Staff use software to track student enrollment in college</li> </ul>