

College-Going and Career-Focused Culture: This Is How We Do It

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Time Frame 60 minutes

Essential Question(s)

- How can school leaders and educators promote a college-going and career-focused culture that helps students prepare for and pursue postsecondary education (PSE)?

Summary

In this professional learning experience, participants will explore how to build a strong college-going and career-focused culture. They will examine real-world examples of how GEAR UP models this to inspire students to plan for postsecondary education. Finally, participants will browse and use a practical digital resource kit filled with activities and tools to enhance college- and career-readiness efforts in their own school.

Learning Goals

Standards

InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards (K-12th)

10c: The teacher engages collaboratively in the schoolwide effort to build a shared vision and supportive culture, identify common goals, and monitor and evaluate progress toward those goals.
10o: The teacher knows how to contribute to a common culture that supports high expectations for student learning.

Attachments

- Assessment Rubric—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.docx
- Assessment Rubric—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.pdf
- High Expectations—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.docx
- High Expectations—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.pdf
- Iceberg Card Sorting Mat—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.docx
- Iceberg Card Sorting Mat—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.pdf
- Making Connections—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.docx
- Making Connections—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.pdf
- Note Catcher—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.docx
- Note Catcher—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.pdf
- Presentation Slides—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.pptx
- Statement Cards—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.docx
- Statement Cards—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.pdf
- Visual Cues—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.docx
- Visual Cues—College-Going and Career-Focused Culture.pdf

Materials

- Presentation Slides (attached)
- Iceberg Card Sorting Mat (attached; one per group; print one-sided on 11x17” paper)
- Statement Cards (attached; one set per group; print one-sided)
- Note Catcher handout (attached; one per participant; print one-sided)
- Assessment Rubric (attached; one per participant; print one-sided)
- High Expectations document (attached)
- Making Connections document (attached)
- Visual Cues document (attached)
- Pens
- Paper

10 minutes

Engage

Use the attached **Presentation Slides** to guide the session. Display **slide 2** and introduce the session to the participants.

Transition through **slides 3–4** and review the essential question and learning objectives. Advance to **slide 5** and ask participants what comes to mind when they hear *college-going and career-focused culture*. Have participants discuss with others at their table for a few moments or ask volunteers to share their thoughts with the whole group.

Optional: Digital Integration

If you would prefer a digital version of this activity, consider representing individual participants' responses with a word cloud using a tech tool like Slido or Mentimeter. This digital option is strongly recommended to add visual aid and engagement.

Move to **slide 6** and introduce the Round Robin strategy. Explain to participants that within their groups, one participant needs to use the pen and paper at their table to record responses as group members take turns, each sharing an idea. Explain that they should consider the ideal elements of college-going and career-focused culture in schools to make a list of fantastic ideas that could impact or improve that culture, e.g., "Wouldn't it be fantastic if … *we could offer more extracurricular activities that are STEM related?*"

As time allows, ask for volunteers to share recorded responses with the whole group.

5 minutes

Explore

Place a copy of the attached **Iceberg Card Sorting Mat** and a set of the attached **Statement Cards** at each table group. Transition to **slide 7** and introduce the Card Sort strategy. Explain to participants that this is a discovery activity, so they should use their best judgment and context clues to organize the concepts (cards) into (unidentified) categories. Although this may be uncomfortable initially, the strategy allows participants to justify their ideas, consider others' ideas, and modify their thinking as new information is presented.

Have participants set aside their sorted statement cards and mat to review later. If limited on space, consider having one member from each group use their device to take a picture of their work for later reference.

15 minutes

Explain

Facilitator's Note: Slide Preparation

Slides 10–12 contain specific examples of how GEAR UP services and experiences model the different levels of culture. Feel free to edit these slides to represent what services and experiences you provide.

Distribute a copy of the attached **Note Catcher** handout to each participant and display **slide 8**. Explain to participants that they should use the Note Catcher to record important concepts and ideas related to Schein's Culture Theory and the elements of college-going and career-focused culture in schools. Then read the quote on the slide: "Cultures are learned patterns of beliefs, values, assumptions, and behavioral norms that manifest themselves at different levels of observability." This quote from Edgar Schein's book should help participants begin to see the connection between culture and the iceberg metaphor.

Show **slide 9**, which provides the connection between the language of Shein's levels of culture in an organization and the language used in schools (and used in this learning experience). Starting at the bottom is an organization's ***assumptions***, which are the beliefs and generally held perceptions of that organization. To develop a college-going and career-focused culture, that assumption should align with ***high expectations***. At the next layer of the iceberg is ***values***, which are the norms and strategies we employ. These strategies are what we say and do in classes and extracurricular activities. Again, to support a college-going and career-focused culture, those values should include integrated curriculum and experiential learning, which is collectively referred to as ***making connections***. And at the top of the iceberg are an organization's ***artifacts***, which are the visible elements accessible to all. To help students think about and plan for their futures, ***visual cues*** can make a big impact.

Transition through **slides 10–12** to detail specific examples of how GEAR UP services and experiences model the various elements of a college-going and career-focused culture.

Display **slide 13** and emphasize to participants the following:

- Artifacts are the visual cues and are "what we see."
- Values are referred to as making connections and are "what we say and do."
- Assumptions are the high expectations and are "what we believe."

Show **slide 14** and ask participants to work with their group to re-sort the Statement Cards on the Iceberg Card Sorting Mat, based on what they know now. After about 2–3 minutes, transition through **slides 15–17** to review the suggested answers to the Card Sort. Allow participants to share any alternative suggestions.

25 minutes

Extend

Distribute the **Assessment Rubric** and display **slide 18**. Share that the assessment is intended to help participants to evaluate and share the cultural elements of their own school. The statements are grouped into the three sections they just learned: ***Visual Cues***, ***Making Connections***, and ***High Expectations***.

Show **slide 19** and invite participants to read each statement on the rubric. Direct them to score themselves using the rating scale of 1–3 as they read. Allow a few minutes for participants to complete the assessment. They should recognize some of these statements from the earlier Card Sort activity.

Display **slide 20** and direct participants to add the scores for the statements to find a total score for each section on their rubric. The handout indicates *beginner*, *intermediate*, and *advanced* for score ranges for each section. Have participants use this information to reflect and note areas of strength and weakness. Give participants a few minutes to tally their scores and reflect.

Move to **slide 21** and direct participants to find their overall total score by adding the scores from the three sections together. Then show **slide 22**. Ask participants to consider the following questions:

- In what areas is our school doing well?
- Which areas need the most improvement?

Encourage participants to write down their answers on their handout. As time allows, have participants share within their groups, and then ask for volunteers to share with the whole group.

Display **slide 23.** Invite participants to investigate the *College and Career Culture Tool Kit*. Share with participants that this tool kit is compiled from a variety of resources educators may use to positively influence the college-going and career-focused culture in their schools or spheres of influence. If participants are teachers, they may find the student-facing learning opportunities most useful, whereas counselors and administrators may find the educator- or family-facing resources more applicable.

Show **slide 24** and share the attached **Visual Cues**, **Making Connections**, and **High Expectations** documents that represent the three sections of the *College and Career Culture Tool Kit*. Encourage participants to spend time looking through each tool kit and to pay particular attention to the sections that may help address areas of deficiency noted in their completed Assessment Rubric.

5 minutes

Evaluate

Show **slide 25**. Ask participants to write down at least one tangible strategy on the back of their Note Catcher that they could take from the *College and Career Culture Tool Kit* to improve the college-going and career-focused culture in their school. After a few minutes, ask for volunteers to share their ideas.

Research Rationale

Research rationale for this resource is provided in the literature review College-Going Culture in High Schools: The Effects of College Expectations and College Talk on Students' Postsecondary Attendance.

Resources

- DinosoftLabs. (2020, August 29). *Tool kit*. [Illustration]. The noun project. https://thenounproject.com/icon/tool-kit-4104261/
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Card sort. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/147
- K20 Center. (n.d.). *College-going culture in high schools: The effects of college expectations and college talk on students' postsecondary attendance*. Literature Review. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/literature-review/4774
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Mentimeter. Tech tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/645
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Round robin. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/2183
- K20 Center. (n.d.) Shortened URL links. Tech tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/3319
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Slido. Tech tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/4985
- Schein, E. H. (2016). *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (5th ed., Ser. The Jossey-Bass Business and Management Series). John Wiley & Sons.