



# College Access Gap Audit

Prioritizing Best Practices to Close the College Access Gap for Underrepresented Students

## Resource in Brief

Use this diagnostic to help you determine which practices to implement from EAB's study *Closing the College Access Gap*. The questions on the following pages are structured according to the four key areas of opportunity for increasing college access for underrepresented students:

1. Creating a culture of high expectations
2. Building student confidence through advanced course work
3. Ensuring college choice focuses on likelihood of success
4. Removing barriers to application and matriculation

## 3 Ways to Use This Audit

- Assess current strategies in place district-wide to support college access for underrepresented students
- Identify areas of greatest opportunity for intervention and/or innovation
- Prioritize best practices to facilitate school- and district-level improvement

# College Access Gap Audit

## Instructions

This audit is designed to help you evaluate the resources in place at your institution to support college access for low-income and minority students. Rate your current capabilities for each criterion with a simple "yes/no" answer.

	No	Yes
<b>Creating a Culture of High Expectations</b>		
<b>Cultivating College-Going Expectations Among District Staff</b>		
1. Our district has several events, policies, or initiatives specifically designed to promote college-going as an expectation for <b>all</b> students.		
2. Our district tracks interim metrics to monitor ongoing progress toward increased college access.		
3. Our district has processes in place to hold administrators and teachers accountable for increasing college access for low-income and minority students.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ If you answered "no" to question 1 you should consider the strategies for building a district-wide college-going culture, outlined on page 26 of the <i>Closing the College Access Gap</i> study</li> <li>➤ If you answered "no" to questions 2 or 3 you should consider <i>Practice 1: College Access Accountability Dashboard</i></li> </ul>		
<b>Promoting College-Going Expectations Among Parents of Low-Income and Minority Students</b>		
4. College-related events, initiatives, or communications often fail to reach parents of low-income and minority students in our district.		
5. Parents of low-income and minority students in our district tend to be skeptical of the idea of their children going to college.		
6. Parents of low-income and minority students in our district fully understand all of the critical decision points and how to best support their children in pursuing college.		
<p>If you answered "yes" to questions 4 or 5, or "no" to question 6 you should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>EAB's Expert Insight on Conducting a Communications Jargon-Reduction Audit</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Practice 2: Parent University</i></li> </ul>		
<b>Helping Low-Income and Minority Students Develop a College-Going Identity</b>		
7. Our district helps low-income and minority students understand why they should go to college, and highlights relatable examples of success.		
8. When making decisions about postsecondary plans, low-income and minority students in our district may often feel isolated or ostracized (i.e., by peers, family) when considering college.		
9. Despite some encouragement, low-income and minority students in our district tend not to believe they have what it takes to be successful in college.		
<p>If you answered "no" to question 7 or "yes" to questions 8 or 9 you should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Practice 3: Noncognitive College-Identity Curriculum</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Practice 4: Shared-Experience Video Campaign</i></li> </ul>		

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No	Yes
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## Building Student Confidence Through Advanced Course Work

### Expanding Access to Advanced Courses

10. Students must meet a minimum score cutoff (e.g., GPA, standardized exam, end of course grade) before they can be considered for advanced course work (e.g., honors, AP, IB, dual enrollment).		
11. Our students must receive a teacher recommendation to be considered for placement in an advanced course.		
12. The demographic composition (i.e., race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status) of advanced courses in our district accurately reflects the demographics of the district as a whole.		
13. Our district uses student data to objectively identify students capable of success in advanced courses and to ensure appropriate placement in those courses.		

*If you answered "yes" to questions 10 or 11, or "no" to questions 12 or 13 you should consider:*

- *The strategies that facilitate districts' efforts to expand access to advanced courses, described on page 47 of the Closing the College Access Gap study*
- *Practice 5: Advanced-Course Placement Matrix*

### Supporting Student Success in Advanced Course Work

14. Our district cannot expand access to advanced courses because students are not prepared to be successful in taking on advanced course work for the first time.		
15. Students disengage or drop down to lower level courses when faced with the rigor of advanced courses for the first time.		
16. Even when encouraged, underrepresented students are apprehensive about taking on the challenge of advanced course work for the first time and question their ability to be successful.		

*If you answered "yes" to questions 14, 15, or 16 you should consider:*

- *The support structures districts implement for students in advanced courses, outlined on page 54 of the Closing the College Access Gap study*
- *Practice 6: AP Summer Bridge Program*

### Preparing Teachers for a Changed Classroom

17. AP teachers in our district are resistant to the idea of expanding access to advanced courses, or express concern about addressing the needs of students in a more academically diverse classroom.		
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*If you answered "yes" to question 17 you should consider:*

- *Practice 7: Teacher-Led AP Best Practice Training*

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	No	Yes
<b>Ensuring College Choice Focuses on Likelihood of Success</b>		
18. Our district fully understands how well different postsecondary institutions serve our at-risk students, and which institutions have the highest success rates.		
19. Our district uses student outcomes data to inform college counseling and related programming decisions (e.g., district-sponsored college visits, college recruiting events).		
20. Our at-risk students usually consider a limited number of potential colleges, usually focused on those that easily come to mind (e.g., local institutions, where friends have gone).		
21. In the college counseling process, counselors focus on institutions that students express interest in or where students are most likely to be admitted based on their academic credentials.		
22. Our district would like to develop stronger partnerships with postsecondary institutions to promote at-risk students' success after high school graduation.		
<p><i>If you answered "no" to questions 18 or 19, or "yes" to questions 20, 21, or 22 you should consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Practice 9: Success-Focused College Counseling</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Success-Focused College Counseling Implementation Toolkit</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Practice 10: College Transition Partnerships</i></li> </ul>		

	No	Yes
<b>Removing Barriers to Application and Matriculation</b>		
23. Our at-risk students would significantly benefit from more information and/or support in applying to college (e.g., understanding college admissions, completing applications, writing essays).		
24. Our at-risk students often miss key deadlines (e.g., early application deadlines, filing the FAFSA, submitting deposits), preventing them from successfully pursuing postsecondary education.		
<p><i>If you answered "yes" to questions 23 or 24 you should consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Practice 11: Summer College Application Camp</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Practice 13: Just-in-Time Summer Text-Message Reminders</i></li> </ul>		
25. Financial barriers prevent our low-income and minority students from applying or enrolling in postsecondary education.		
26. Students and parents in our district need better information on all of their college financing options.		
27. Providing sufficient support to our at-risk students/families in interpreting college financing options and processes requires expertise beyond our counselors' capacity and/or training.		
<p><i>If you answered "yes" to questions 25, 26, or 27 you should consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Practice 12: Dedicated Financial Aid Support Expert</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Practice 14: Transition-Targeted Micro-Scholarships</i></li> <li>➤ <i>EAB's Expert Insight on Robert Morris University's College Affordability Academy</i></li> </ul>		