Eliminating Barriers for Under-Represented and Students of Color through Board Policy

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OSBA Summer Conference (Bend, OR) July 15, 2016

LEARNER OUTCOMES

1. Recognize the Board’s policy role in, and ability to, eliminate academic and system barriers for students.

2. Gain an appreciation for the diversity of challenges students are encountering in order to develop effective policy responses.

3. Receive examples of supports and innovative strategies for consideration during Board policy discussions and study sessions.

AGENDA

1. Provide background and context about changes that are driving policy.

2. Present a few of the academic, system, financial, family and cultural barriers impacting students.

3. Discuss strategies to consider as part of policy development and resource allocation.
By 2018, about two-thirds of all employment will require some college education or more.

Categories of Barriers

1. Academic
   - With a significant sub-section of ELL issues

2. Financial

3. Institutional and System Across Pre-K - 20

4. Family and Cultural

Academic Barriers (Selected Findings)

- Guidance counselors lack information about the breadth of career options available to students, career guidance pathways that align with secondary and postsecondary access and success, how to develop secondary and postsecondary partnerships (community-based - collective impact, and statewide), and how to support students and families with financial aid information.

- Guidance counselors have insufficient time to assist students and families with career planning.
  - National avg. ratio = 1:500; OR = 1:604
### Academic Barriers for ELL Students
**Selected Findings**

- **Inadequate placement testing** that does not take into account existing background knowledge.
- **Difficulty differentiating what is important and what is supplementary information in textbooks** - when reading in another language all material is given equal weight.
- **Lack of connection** to student’s backgrounds in the examples used in textbooks and on test questions.

### Financial Barriers
**Selected Findings**

- **Financial literacy**. Limited counseling regarding the cost of pursuing a degree and how it will pay for itself.
- **Confusing financial aid process** and the **importance of meeting deadlines** for paperwork.
- **Perception by families that financial aid is a contribution to the family's needs** so it is used for rent/food instead of school expenses.
- **Fees** during the summer before postsecondary that they can't pay for and don't know they can defer.

### Institutional & System Barriers
**Selected Findings**

- **Culturally relevant experiences and imagery** are not incorporated into class simulations and are missing or limited in textbooks.
- **An expectation that students must adapt to the education system**, rather than the system adapting to the changing demographics of student populations.
- **A lack of understanding that job availability**, and no alignment between housing, transportation, health, and human services policies affects student achievement.
FAMILY AND CULTURAL BARRIERS
(SELECTED FINDINGS)

• First generation college students have a fear of failure and worry that the expense of postsecondary education will be a drain on their families. They do not want to let their family/community down and are concerned about their ability to be successful.

• Concern about the perceptions within their communities that they are not conforming to community norms, or gender roles (i.e. women attending college instead of, or in addition to, getting married; men studying for a non-traditional career).

ACADEMIC SUPPORTS
(SELECTED FINDINGS)

• College in the high school and the ability to earn dual-credit in content areas and CTE (Career & Technical Education).

• Opportunities for hands-on experiences, and project-based learning to help with career choices.

• Mentoring: Access to a faculty/staff member, a community member, or a student further along to provide support, accountability, encouragement and social capital.

ACADEMIC SUPPORTS FOR ELL STUDENTS
(SELECTED FINDINGS)

• Use of technology to facilitate language acquisition and the ability to go over the material outside of class (i.e. recorded lessons or instruction with examples)

• Use of technology to facilitate class participation so students can ask questions without being embarrassed or being in a position of violating cultural norms related to questioning authority figures.
**FINANCIAL SUPPORTS (SELECTED FINDINGS)**

- Assistance in completing FAFSA and related financial forms.
- Financial literacy class to understand financial aid responsibilities.
- Adequate financial aid so students are not having to consider how many hours they will need to work while simultaneously attending school (impact post-secondary decisions and length of time in school).

**INSTITUTIONAL & SYSTEM SUPPORTS (SELECTED FINDINGS)**

- Access to PSAT and SAT/ACT testing at the student's own high school (fees can be reduced or eliminated based on free and reduced lunch designation)
  - Step 2: Follow-up on practice tests to explain items that were answered incorrectly.
- Assistance with college application process, including assistance during the summer between graduation and starting classes in the fall to prevent “summer melt.”
- Access to Seal of Bi-Literacy testing (http://www.k12.wa.us/WorldLanguages/SealofBiliteracy.aspx)

**STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

- Hold Board study sessions to understand existing barriers in your schools from the perspective of parents and students.
- Look at the issue of barriers through an equity lens.
- Develop a clear understanding of what "local control" means for your ability to address your students' needs.
STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

• Focus on **middle school as the “sweet spot”** for engaging students and removing barriers.
  -> Transition Goals (both entering and exiting MS)
  -> Graduation Specialist
  -> Counselor, parent, student meeting in 8th grade to discuss career/education goals and register for high school classes at that point (develop a HS and Beyond Plan).
  -> “IEP’s” for each student that include parent/guardian participation and input.

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STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

• Review your **attendance/discipline data for disproportionality** and how system or cultural barriers may be contributing to your data.

• Look at barriers to **authentic family engagement**
  -> Title I - 20% requirement for family engagement activities.

• **Leverage the focus on STEM/STEAM careers** by legislators, the business community, and the non-profit sector to elevate barrier issues, and support efforts to address them at a system level.

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STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

• **Think beyond your own district**
  -> Collaborative efforts (i.e. city/county initiatives)
  -> Collective Impact (i.e. Road Map Project)
  -> Regional focus on a shared or specific barrier
  -> Embrace the language of “our kids”, not “those kids” in areas of high mobility
  -> Work across sectors (i.e. transportation, housing, workforce development, health, and human services)
STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER FOR RESOURCE ALLOCATION

• Have a designated, culturally agile "point person(s)" or a Family Liaison who is a bridge between staff, students, and family.

• Think in terms of a P-12 continuum (Need “X” at grade “Y” for outcome “Z” - graduation and post-secondary preparation)

• Develop opportunities to experience a variety of careers for K-12 students.

STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER FOR RESOURCE ALLOCATION

• Create/support a designated College/Career guidance counselor to provide individualized attention and guidance on post-secondary options.

• Improve access to wrap-around services: academic, family, social/emotional support.

STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER FOR RESOURCE ALLOCATION

• Survey students, staff and community stakeholders to find out what they perceive as barriers
  -> Conduct focus groups where people in your community gather -> Go To Them!

• Provide teacher and counselor summer and weekend (paid) internships to expose PreK-12 personnel to post-secondary access, admissions, and transition programs.

• Sponsor post-secondary scholarship and financial aid workshops for families in numerous languages and at various locations.
STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER FOR RESOURCE ALLOCATION

- Create a clear degree pathway from PreK-12 through the higher education systems for both students AND parents to understand.

- Provide professional development training for all staff to increase their cultural agility.

- Provide professional development training to high school and middle school counselors on the nationally recommended college/career standards (adopted in 2012).

CALL TO ACTION

What barrier will you commit to address when you return to your community?
RESOURCES:

- Predictors of Postsecondary Success, American Institute for Research: [www.ccrscenter.org/sites/default/files/ccrs%20Center_predictors](http://www.ccrscenter.org/sites/default/files/ccrs%20Center_predictors)


- The Road Map Initiative: [http://www.roadmapproject.org/](http://www.roadmapproject.org/)