



Putting Kids on the Pathway to College

Student Survey Tool

developed by Carol Ascher, Anne T. Henderson, and Sara McAlister

How well is your high school preparing students, especially low-income students, to graduate on time, ready for college-level work, and with a college or technical school acceptance letter in hand? The College Pathways series (see sidebar) is designed to help schools answer that question, as well as understand and adopt practices that researchers have identified as common to high schools that graduate a high percentage of low-income students and send them on to college.

The tools in this series are intended to be used together in order to involve the full school community – educators, families, students, and community members – in assessing your school’s efforts and finding ways to strengthen them. The tools are: a framework and rubric to help assess how well your school’s practices align with practices in high-performing high schools; a survey to gather data on students’ perspectives; and focus group protocols for students and families to deepen understanding and help people learn from each other. All the tools have been field tested.

About the Student Survey

Key Components This survey is aligned with the *College Pathways Rubric*, and both the survey and the rubric are based on findings from the study *Beating the Odds* (see sidebar).

The survey covers three key characteristics identified in a group of high schools whose low-income students of color have “beaten the odds” – almost 70 percent of students entering these schools graduate four years later planning to attend college or technical school. These schools all offered academically challenging classes and programs, timely supports

for students to do well, and a culture that emphasizes college or technical school.

How the College Pathways Series Was Developed

The College Pathways series grew out of the findings in *Beating the Odds*, a study of thirteen high-performing New York City high schools by Carol Ascher and Cindy Maguire for the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Each of the schools admitted ninth-graders with high poverty rates and far-below-average reading and math scores but produced four-year graduation rates and college acceptance above the district average, and well above other high schools serving similar students.

The study identified four “key components” common to these “beat the odds” schools:

- Academic rigor
- A network of timely supports
- A culture of college access
- Effective use of data

To help other schools benefit from what these schools have learned, the Annenberg Institute has developed a set of tools that schools can use to assess their status in the key component areas and to strengthen their practices to put all their students on a path-way to college.

The *Beating the Odds* study and the full set of tools (Rubric, Student Survey and Focus Group Protocol, and Parent Focus Group Protocol) are available at: www.annenberginstitute.org/Products/BTO.php

Survey Questions In Section One of the survey, for each of these three key characteristics, students are asked to agree or disagree with several statements about their experience in school. Questions in Section Two ask about what programs the school offers to support students' timely graduation and preparation for college and about what they themselves find useful. In Section Three, for purposes of analysis, the survey asks students about their personal characteristics.

Administering the Survey The survey can be given on paper for students to fill out, or it can be entered into an online program such as Survey Monkey so that students can respond online. (The first method creates a paper record of what students said, an opportunity for them to express their thoughts on paper, and fewer logistical issues about access to computers; the second method makes it easier to administer and tally.) The survey can be given in a number of settings – at advisory period, in homeroom, during afterschool programs, or in community meetings.

Tallying the Data If the survey is given on paper, the data can be tallied by hand or entered in Survey Monkey, which will tally the results and give you a report. You will see the number of students who strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each question, and you can compare the responses of students from different ethnic groups, gender, age, grade, or home language.

Interpreting the Data To understand what the data suggest, you can ask a series of questions, such as:

1. Do students think they are being well prepared for college?
2. Do some groups of students agree that they have experienced high expectations, timely supports, and a college-prep culture more than other groups of students?
3. Which of the key components of the college pathways program appear to be stronger in students' experience?

4. Do students feel they are receiving enough support at school to do well?
5. What ideas do students have to improve the program?

A Student Project

Conducting this survey can be an excellent project for the student organization at your school, in collaboration with a school-improvement team, school governing council, or other initiative. Students can recruit their classmates to take the survey, enter the data into an online program, tally and analyze the results, and report on their findings.

Is Your School Creating a “Pathway to College”?

A Survey of Student Opinion

We want to know how well you think your school is preparing you to graduate on time, ready to begin college or technical school. We know you have a lot to say about your school, and this survey has been designed so that you can share your ideas in several ways.

The survey has three sections:

- In Section One, you’ll be asked to rate your level of agreement with a series of statements about your experiences in your school.
- In Section Two, you will have a chance to tell us which programs and supports are offered by your school and which you personally use, as well as what the school could do better.
- Section Three asks some questions about you in order to identify how different groups of students feel. This survey is anonymous – NOTHING in any part of the survey will identify you individually.

The survey begins on the next page.

Student Survey

Is Our School a “Pathway to College”?

SECTION ONE

Please check the box that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement below.

Challenging classes and programs

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I have to work hard to do well in my academic subjects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. My teachers don't believe I can do well in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I know how well I am doing in each of my academic classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Some of the courses offered at this school are really hard.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Support to do well

5. My teachers quickly notice if I have trouble learning something.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. It's hard to get teachers or other staff to explain schoolwork.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I have one special adult at school I can talk to about personal problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. My teachers know how I am doing in <i>all</i> my classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. If I do poorly on a test or part of a course, I know how to make up or relearn the work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A culture that leads to college or technical school

10. I know which courses I still need to take before I can graduate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I feel comfortable asking a teacher or counselor about my grades or my program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. An adult at my school is assisting me in applying to colleges or technical school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. A lot of students at my school are discouraged about what it takes to graduate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I am confident that I will do well in college or technical school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION TWO

Below is a list of programs or activities your school may be offering to prepare you to graduate and go to college. Please check whether they are available at your school, and which ones you have used. The last item asks for your suggestions about what our school could do better.

	Available	I've Used It	Not Available
15. Help with improving my academic skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Test-taking preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Special help with tough classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Information on what's expected in college or technical school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Information on what life is really like in college or technical school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Someone I can talk to when I lose confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Tutoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Special makeup classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. What could your school do better to help you work toward graduation and college?			

SECTION THREE

Please tell us more about yourself.

24. Are you: male female

25. What school do you attend? _____

26. How old are you? _____

27. What grade are you in? _____

28. Are you in a college prep program? Yes No

29. Are you planning to attend college? Yes No

30. What is your race or ethnic background? (Check all that apply.)

Asian

African American

Latino/Hispanic

Native American

White

Other (please write in) _____

31. What language do you speak most often at home? (Check all that apply.)

English

Spanish

Other (please write in) _____

32. Please tell us more about what you think: Do you have other comments or suggestions about your school?