



Partnership for College Access and Success (PCAS) Initiative Abstract

Problem:

Underserved students—including first generation Americans, those in low-income families, and youth of color—face significant barriers to college access. In communities all over America, no systematic approach existed to target postsecondary education programs and services to these students. As a result, students with potential in Sacramento high schools were not enrolling or succeeding in college because they'd never been given the resources.

Need:

Sacramento's Youth Development Network (YDN) was one of several organizations concerned that barriers to postsecondary access and success weren't being addressed. The organization stood behind the Partnership for College Access and Success' idea that Sacramento needed pressure and involvement from the community as whole, in the form of viable partnerships, to link underserved youth with adults providing academic, career and financial advice.

Solution:

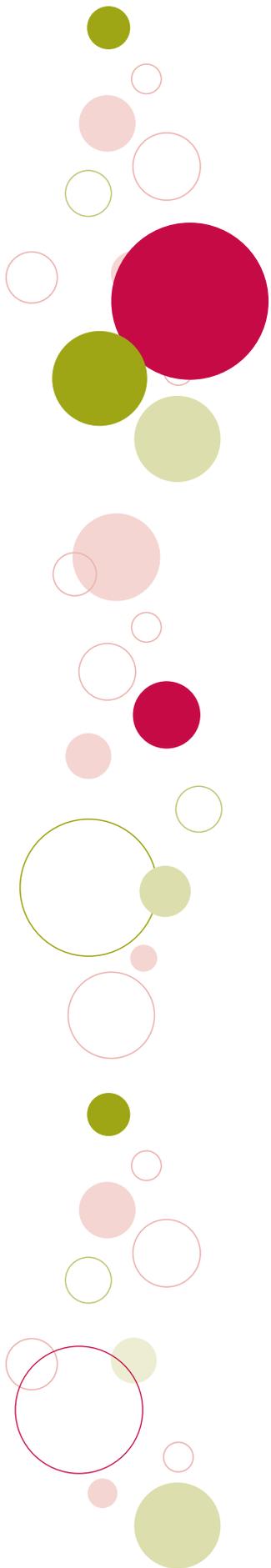
In 2004, the PCAS initiative received funding from the Lumina Foundation for Education, followed by a grant from The Academy for Educational Development (AED). As a result, PCAS set to work developing effective cooperation and partnerships between influential community members and organizations who could advocate for programs and policies that would improve the number of underserved students receiving access to postsecondary degrees.

Funding:

Phase I:

Linking Education and Economic Development (LEED), received funding for August 2005-May 2007 because of their involvement with Sacramento City Unified School District and the Carnegie Corporation's School for a New Society education reform known as e21 (Education for the 21st Century).

During their grant period, LEED staff successfully developed a partnership, created a work plan and program materials, began to collect data to benchmark student progress, and laid a solid foundation for creating a college-going culture at Hiram Johnson High School.



Phase II:

YDN was awarded funding from October 2007 to August 2008 because of their work in joining individuals and organizations throughout the Sacramento region to promote strength-based principles that support the positive development of youth.

During their grant period, YDN focused on completing the data collection and evaluation begun during the first phase, worked with partners to develop a sustainability plan for the PCAS initiative, and created a report that other high schools and partnerships could use in their efforts to increase college access and success for students. During this phase, the YDN team planned and facilitated two convenings of the PCAS partners and conducted meetings with key stakeholders to provide information about the PCAS initiative and secure commitments to sustain the work. Additionally, a Sacramento State University graduate student was hired to pull together existing data and analyze the impact PCAS and other college access efforts at the site had on student college enrollment and persistence.

Case Study:

A Closer Look at Implementing PCAS at Hiram Johnson High School

The Quick Facts on Hiram Johnson High School

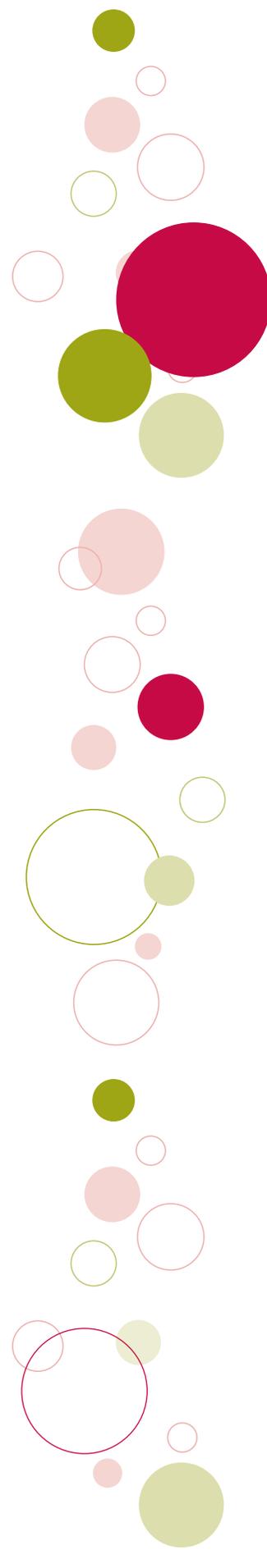
- One of five comprehensive high schools within Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD).
- Composed of nine small learning communities (SLCs) each with a distinct career focus, and approximately 250 students.
- Serves a richly diverse student population with numerous socioeconomic challenges, including a high number of refugees.
- Current demographics: Asian-American 26%; Hispanic or Latino 25%; White 22%; African-American 20%; American-Indian 2%; Pacific Islander 1%; and other make up 4%.
- Large number of students at risk of dropping out: 43% of students are English Language Learners and 62% of students qualify for free and reduced price meals.
- Because of language barriers, the school lacks parental engagement.
- The community experiences difficulties with gang activity and neighborhood violence that creates occasional tension on the school campus.

Challenges:

At Hiram Johnson High School, getting through high school was often a bigger question than getting into college. Gang activity, neighborhood violence, a highly transient population, a large number of ELL students and low parent engagement adversely affected students' academic learning.

Other key problems included:

- College access information was available, but it was not coordinated or readily accessible by students and teachers.

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- Information regarding a-g courses (the 15 year-long courses students must complete to be considered eligible for admission to a CSU or UC degree program), college applications, financial aid, and scholarships were not disseminated in a systematic manner.
 - Lack of tracking student success in applying for, enrolling in, and attending college.

Hope:

Despite the lack of systematic focus on access to college, PCAS staff discovered that a “college-going culture” was beginning to emerge in three of the small learning communities: Business Information and Technology, Government and Public Administration, and the Community Studies Academy. At the time, all three SLCs had federally funded grant support and relationships with outside partners in the nonprofit and academic sectors. These conditions were ideal for establishing a college-going culture and a systematic approach to increasing college access and success.

“In the beginning I had to make several changes... Student records and files were inaccurate, students were not receiving the correct services or they did not have the right classifications. The school also had a lot of gang activity, and I had to lock down (the school to address that issue before anything else could change.”

—Lynne Tafoya, Principal, 2008.

Change:

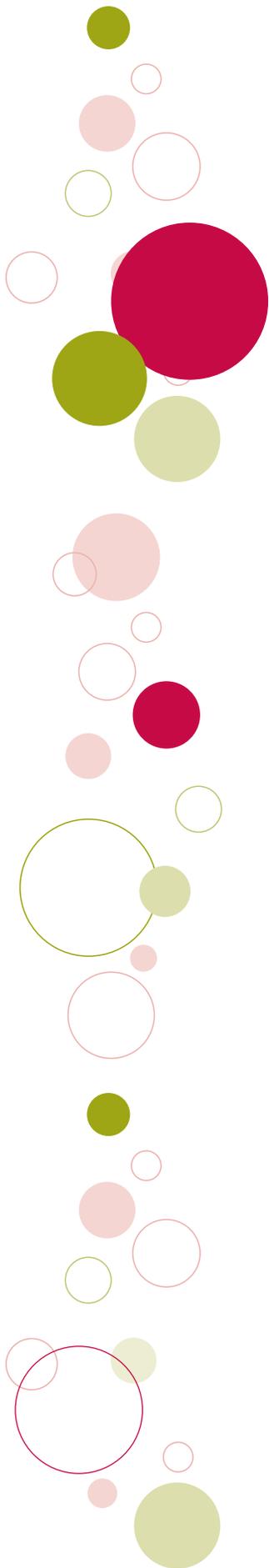
According to several studies, establishing a supportive school culture is the most essential element for successful educational reform. In 2004, the district hired Principal Lynne Tafoya to address the administrative and safety challenges present at Hiram Johnson, and work with LEED and SCUSD to implement the PCAS initiative. Their focus rested on parent engagement, staff development and coordination of outreach workers. They also introduced Transcript Evaluation Services (TES) to establish a baseline system to track students’ progress toward completing a-g requirements. Lastly, they adopted McClafferty’s and McDonough’s framework (2002) for the nine critical elements of a college-going culture.

What is a college-going culture?

The University of California, Berkeley Student Outreach Program defines a college-going culture as “The environment, attitudes, and behaviors in schools and communities that support and encourage students and their families to obtain the information, tools and perspective to ensure access to and success in postsecondary education.”

Nine Critical Elements of a College-Going Culture

- Clear Expectations: Explicit, clearly defined goals, communicated in ways that make them part of the school culture.
- Targeted Information and Resources: Comprehensive, up-to-date college information and resources, easily accessible by all students, families and school personnel.



- Comprehensive Counseling Model: A view of counseling that makes all student interactions with counseling staff opportunities for college counseling.
- College Talk: Clear, ongoing communication among teachers, students, administrators, and families about what it takes to get to college.
- Faculty Involvement: Informed, active participation from school faculty in the creation and maintenance of a college culture
- Family Involvement: Meaningful engagement on the part of family members in the process of building a college culture.
- Testing and Curriculum: Information about and access to “gatekeeping” tests (PSAT, SAT, ACT, etc.) and courses (Advanced Placement and honors courses) for all students.
- College Partnerships: Active links in a variety of forms between the school and local colleges and universities.

Partnerships that Make the Difference

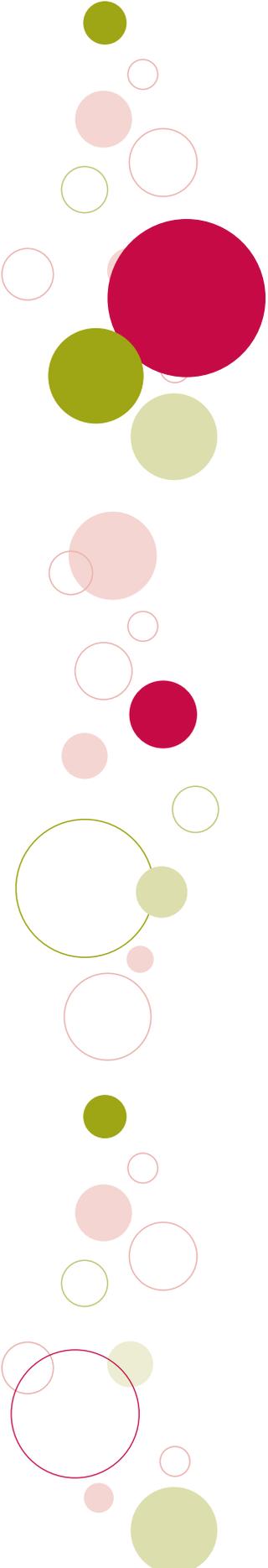
Operation College

During the PCAS partnership’s initial formation, other key partnerships were developing on the Hiram Johnson campus including an instrumental relationship with Sacramento City Council member Kevin McCarty’s Operation College initiative. Operation College provides funding for a postsecondary college counselor position that coordinates college access services and information on the Hiram Johnson campus.

In many ways, the appointment of a postsecondary counselor provided the glue to hold the college access partnership together.

- PCAS partners were better able to access students and work together to coordinate their services.
- College access services that were previously offered within specific SLCs could now be delivered school wide.
- The postsecondary counselor also worked with school staff and PCAS partners to provide.
- Lunchtime college application workshops with representatives from local community colleges, Sacramento State University, and University of California, Davis.
- Evening college information and financial aid workshops for students and parents.
- Targeted programs and classroom visits with 9th, 10th and 11th graders to discuss PSAT, SAT and ACT testing, college admissions requirements and applications, financial aid applications and scholarships, and college readiness.

In addition to partially funding the postsecondary counselor position, Councilmember Kevin McCarty and his staff convened a team of researchers and community partners to collect and analyze data around college readiness and students’ graduation rates.



“I definitely see a need for my position. It helps to have one counselor who can focus on college outreach visits, keep track of changes in the a-g requirements and college admission requirements, and pay attention to the seniors’ graduation needs.”
—Shelia Sidqe, postsecondary counselor

Cal-SOAP/College Horizons

Now provides information about college and financial aid applications to students in the classroom and during Hiram Johnson’s Family Nights. Cal-SOAP/ College Horizons also developed the Senior Survey to measure the number and types of college access services students receive.

Sacramento City College (SCC)

Assists students with the college application process and provides information about financial aid and student support services on the SCC campus. SCC also offers a summer bridge program to increase the success of incoming freshmen.

UC Davis and Sacramento State University’s Early Academic Outreach Programs

Both colleges participate in college fairs, and provide students with information about the admissions process.

Sacramento State University Ethnic Studies Department

Provides student tutors to connect college-age mentors with students at Hiram Johnson and assist high schoolers to prepare for the CAHSEE.

Sacramento City Unified School District’s Community, Health and Student Support Services, particularly the Parent Support Services Department

Provides assistance with developing strategies for engaging parents and families.

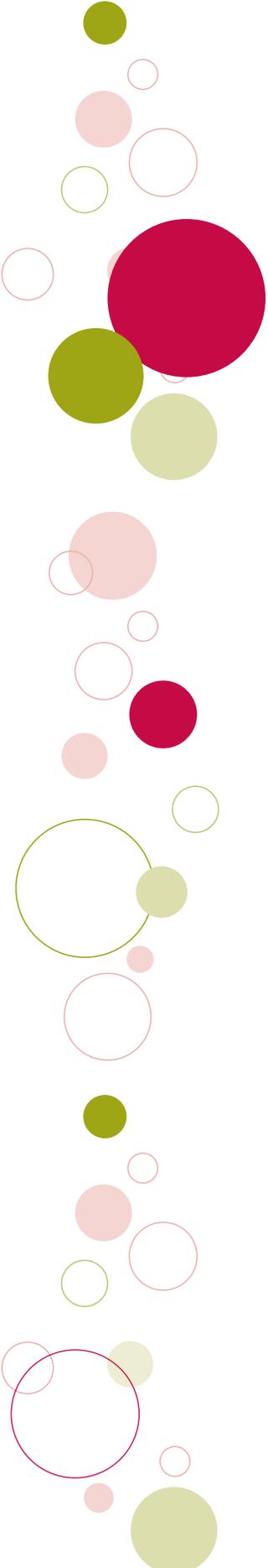
PCAS Implemented Strategies that Work at Hiram Johnson

Increase college awareness by...

- ...Creating and disseminating a-g college requirement posters and folders to increase awareness of college eligibility requirements among student, teachers and parents.
- ...Providing services at school to ensure that folders and college talks were given to each student.
- ...Placing an emphasis on college awareness through the implementation of “College on the Quad Wednesdays” and monthly scholarship bulletins.

Increase student readiness by...

- ...Raising awareness of college entrance tests such as ELM/EPT, and providing information about preparing for the PSAT, SAT and ACT.



...Securing funding for all Hiram Johnson sophomores to take the PSAT, followed by a test results review with postsecondary counselors.

...Providing funding to increase the number of field trips to college campuses. Two private college readiness counselors, Rick Sanger from The College Source and Jill Yoshikawa from Creative Marbles, also provided pro-bono services to several Hiram Johnson students.

Engage families by...

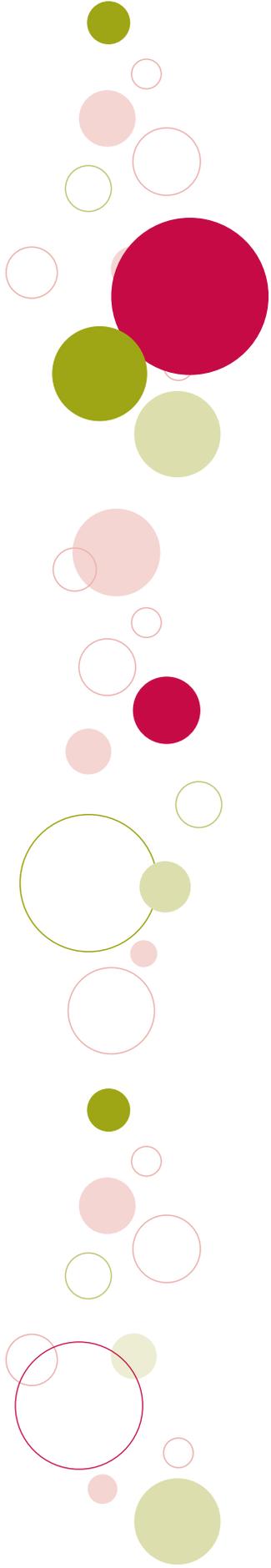
...Pushing attendance at “Family Nights,” designed to help parents and their children navigate through the college application and financial aid process. These events, hosted in collaboration with Operation College, were attended by several hundred parents, which represent an increase in attendance of nearly 60%. The following components were key contributors to Family Nights’ success:

- Calling and distributing flyers to parents
- Providing food and child care at each event
- Providing homework assistance to all school age children during the events
- Giving away college incentives
- Offering translation in several languages (Spanish, Hmong, Russian, Mien)

“This is a great chance for me to understand what to do for my daughters,” reported a parent during a post-event survey. Another parent noted, “I am glad to see the workshops being provided in other languages. Not all parents speak English.”

Provide workshops and training for students, teachers, staff and administrators...

- Student Workshops: Preparing for College, Financial Aid and Early College Awareness courses are offered during Family Nights and in the classrooms. The workshops inform juniors and seniors about the steps involved with getting to college, completing the FAFSA, applying for scholarships, PSAT and SAT preparation, a-g requirements and transcript evaluation.
- Staff Development Workshops: College Bound Planning and Creating a College Going Culture are offered as a professional development module for teachers and counselors. Participants receive ideas for infusing college planning into daily interactions with students and topics such as classroom awareness, cultural sensitivity and teacher commitment.
- District Workshops: Maximizing College Access introduces administrators and higher education representatives to the importance of data sharing in college access programs.



Outcomes at Hiram Johnson High School:

Completion of a-g Requirements

Whole school numbers from Transcript Evaluation Service (TES) show a slight but steady increase in completion of a-g requirements, and a similar trend is reflected in the targeted Small Learning Communities. In 2006-2007, 17% of the targeted SLC graduating seniors showed satisfactory completion of a-g requirements as compared with a 15% completion rate for the whole school.

FAFSA Completion

The whole school FAFSA completion rate increased from 23% to 29% during the PCAS initiative. However, students in the targeted SLCs consistently show a significantly higher FAFSA completion rate than the whole school population with approximately 65% of students completing a FAFSA each year.

Completion of College Applications

Beginning in 2006, all seniors in the targeted SLCs were required to complete at least one college application resulting in a 100% college application rate for those students. Previously, 83% of the SLC seniors completed applications. During the PCAS initiative, the college application completion also rose from 65% to 71%. College application numbers also include applications to vocational and technical certification programs.

Enrollment in College or Vocational Certification Programs

Compared with whole school data, students in the targeted SLCs are now slightly more successful in gaining acceptance to college or vocational certification programs. 85% of SLC students who apply to a postsecondary educational program are accepted as compared to 68%. College enrollment is also increasing from year to year. Nearly 50% of students enrolling in a postsecondary educational program choose to attend a community college.

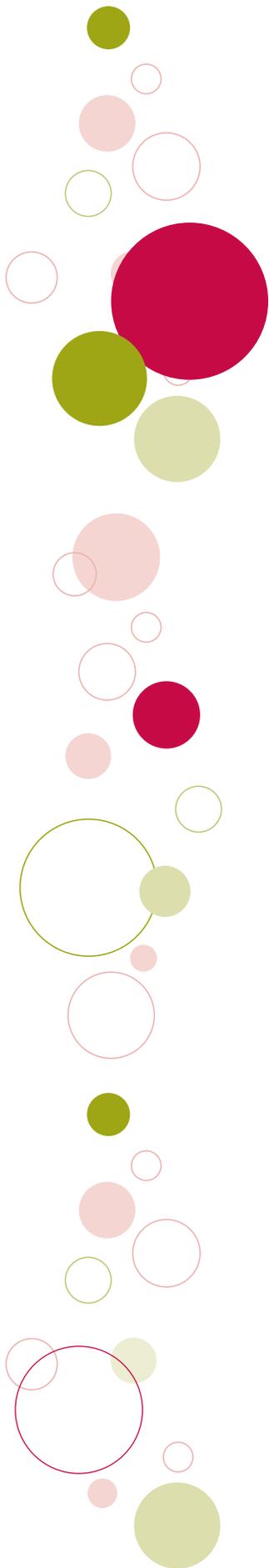
First-Year Completion Rate

Based on data from the National Student Clearinghouse, approximately 85% of Hiram Johnson graduates from the targeted SLCs who enrolled in a postsecondary program completed their first year. This can be attributed, in part, to strong partnerships with academic outreach and support programs at local colleges and universities. Whole school numbers were not available at the time of publication.

How to Help Youth have Access to College

School boards should support schools in providing information to students and parents on college applications, college options, and financial aid. School boards should encourage school sites to have seniors complete the FAFSA and/or a college application letter as part of an English, economics or government classes.

Community colleges should institute a practice that helps students complete the FAFSA as part of their application process.



School boards should support schools sites in administering the CSUS Early Assessment Tool to measure student readiness for State college level work in the 11th grade, if not earlier. Schools should also develop plans to provide tutoring and counseling for students who need remediation or who have not completed required A-G courses.

Cities should partner with schools to hold college fairs that provide information about college readiness, success expectations, and how to navigate the financial aid process.

City recreation programs should partner with schools to offer tutoring, homework assistance and information on college readiness and financial aid assistance for students who attend after school programs.

A Thank You to our Funders

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List of Partners

Council Member Kevin McCarty/Operation College
Cal-SOAP College Horizons
Sacramento City Unified School District
Sacramento City College EOPS
Sacramento State University EOPS
Sacramento State University Ethnic Studies Department
LEED
Youth Development Network
The College Source
Creative Marbles
UC Davis EAOP
Center for Fathers and Families
Asian Resources
Friday Night Live
Sacramento City Unified School District's Community, Health and Student Support Services Parent Support Services Department

For More Information

Contact Lynne Tafoya, Academic Achievement Administrator, at Sacramento City Unified School District at (916) 643-9411 or lynneta@sac-city.k12.ca.us

Visit the Lumina Foundation online at www.luminafoundation.org. Lumina is involved in several initiatives focused on improving academic success beyond high school. The site provides information about grant opportunities to support college access and success efforts.

Visit College Tools for Schools at www.collegetools.berkeley.edu to learn how to prepare California high school students for college and careers.

Contact Bina Lefkovitz, Youth Development Network, 916 213 9679 or bina@ydnetwork.org