

A college-going culture doesn't happen by chance—it's built intentionally through consistent messaging, supportive systems, and high expectations for all students. No matter where your school is on its journey, this checklist is designed to help you assess your school's current efforts and identify key areas for growth. Use it as part of a larger strategy to cultivate an environment where every student is equipped and empowered to pursue postsecondary success.

## **1. Assess and Reflect**

- Assess your school's current college-going culture using Appily's **College-Going Culture Rubric**.
- Gather and review data on course access, advising loads, event attendance, and postsecondary outcomes by demographic group.
- Solicit input from students, families, and staff about their experiences and needs related to college and career planning.

## **2. Build a Shared Vision**

- Facilitate staff reflection on beliefs, expectations, and implicit bias regarding college access and success.
- Engage a diverse group of stakeholders (students, families, teachers, administrators) to help shape a shared vision for postsecondary success.
- Develop and communicate clear, inclusive goals that value all postsecondary pathways (two-year, four-year, technical, military, certificate programs, workforce).



### **3. Strengthen Systems and Structures**

- Form a college and career readiness task force or working group.
- Create grade-level checklists and advising schedules starting in at least 9th grade.
- Develop and communicate clear, inclusive goals that value all postsecondary pathways (two-year, four-year, technical, military, certificate programs, workforce).

### **4. Expand Access and Personalization**

- Provide early and ongoing exposure to a variety of postsecondary options.
- Highlight alumni who have pursued a range of pathways.
- Offer individualized college and career advising to every student.

### **5. Engage and Empower Families**

- Communicate regularly and in multiple languages/formats about all aspects of the college process.
- Host inclusive events and workshops designed for all families, especially those who are underrepresented or less engaged.
- Invite and incorporate family feedback into planning and programming.



## **6. Promote Equity and Close Gaps**

- Track participation and outcomes (e.g., AP/honors enrollment, college visits, scholarships) by demographic group.
- Provide targeted support for first-generation, low-income, and marginalized students.
- Offer ongoing professional development for staff on equity and cultural competence.
- Pursue grants and resources to address barriers (e.g., fees, application support, Internet access).

## **7. Celebrate Progress and Sustain Momentum**

- Publicly celebrate students pursuing all types of postsecondary pathways.
- Share stories of student and alumni success broadly within the school community.
- Review progress annually and adjust strategies based on data and feedback.
- Institutionalize successful systems and practices so they are sustained over time.