

# ADVANCING THE ACHIEVEMENT INTO HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATION OF COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAMMING BY ANN JENKIN, M.A.

## Background

- Breakthrough Twin Cities (BTC) is a college access programming (CAP) that serves approximately 400 students in grades 7-12 with the support of 12 full time staff, about 60 seasonal staff, and 12 board members
- BTC has demonstrated success in supporting first generation and under resourced students
- Mixed methods case study that aimed to:
  - Understand perceptions of college
  - Discover CAP influential practices on self-concept and asset-based mindsets
  - Define college going culture
  - Identify on-going barriers
  - Find implications for other orgs
- Conducted through:
  - Interviews and surveys of staff, board members, students, and parents
    - 19 interviews
    - 50 online surveys

## Limitations

- Limited parent input
- No 12th grade participation

## Findings

1. Successful college access programming is tied to the teaching and use of cultural capital, rather than a focus on motivation.
  - Concrete: FAFSA, majors and minors, ACT/SAT, etc.
  - Experiential: College visits, panels, admissions visits from colleges and universities
  - Outside: Conferences, camps and other activities
2. College access programs shape self-concept and create asset based mindsets for participants through:
  - Future orientation
    - The codes to college success
    - Early start in grade 7
  - College going peer groups
    - Cohort set up
    - Establishment of friendships with college as a common interest
  - Community-based developmental relationships
    - The community helps develop students, not just a single person/relationship
3. The key factors of a successful college going culture are:
  - Individualization
    - Small class sizes
    - One on one college counseling
  - Unrestricted learning
    - Standards-based teaching
    - Open curriculum, encouragement of creativity, no standardized tests
  - Mirrored Positionality
    - Seeing yourself reflected in the person teaching you (which does not happen for most kids at school)
    - 60% identify as people of color and 40% identify as male

## Conclusions & Recommendations

### Conclusions:

- These skills and practices have the ability to exist in other organizations
- High leverage skills can be utilized in other educational environments
- Need for more research on how to expand

### Recommendations

- Create alumni network
- Diversify the board
- Add focus on 10th grade programming