

DOINGWHATWORKS



Slideshow

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Building Interest in College

Crossland High School, Maryland • March 2010

Topic: Helping Students Navigate the Path to College
Practice: Foster College Aspirations

Highlights

- Crossland High School implements a variety of activities to foster students' interest in college.
- Teachers talk with students about going to college in advisories, through personal relationships, and in college-oriented assemblies.
- The school displays college banners and students' names who have been accepted into college.
- Students talk about the activities that helped foster their college aspirations: student government, Advanced Placement classes, and the principal's leadership council.

About the Site

Crossland High School
Temple Hills, MD

Demographics

89% Black

8% Hispanic
2% Asian
1% White
66% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
7% English Language Learners
8% Special Education

Crossland High School is a comprehensive public school that serves predominantly African American students and students from low-income families. Several key components drive the school's success, including:

- Offering a rigorous, traditional comprehensive program along with a technical academy;
- Collecting and reviewing achievement data to make student-level decisions;
- Communicating frequently with students, parents, and staff;
- Providing students with a disciplined and safe learning environment;
- Implementing a college-going culture and providing supports to help students attend and succeed in college; and
- Providing direct assistance to students and their families in applying, being accepted, and transitioning to college.

Full Transcript

Title Slide: Building Interest in College

Crossland High School seeks to build students' interest in going to college in many ways. The school has activities, classes, and seminars that show the students it's important to go to college. Staff members work closely with the students to establish relationships and to encourage them to set their sights on college.

Slide 1: College assemblies and banners

Text: The College Summit coordinator, Shayla Brooks, shares two ways that teachers help students thinking about going to college. The school invites teachers to talk about their college experiences in assemblies. The school also creates bulletin boards that show the names of seniors and where they have been accepted to college. Hearing the teachers talk about college and seeing where seniors plan to go to college help all students feel that going to college is an attainable goal.

Audio: Crossland High School has a large minority population. Many of the students come from lower socioeconomic levels. Many of the students at Crossland High School are first-generation college students. Their parents, other relatives have never attended college before, so they are setting the bar in their

families.

One of the challenges that we, as educators, at Crossland face is getting students over the idea that college is not for them and that there are other options after high school other than going straight into the workforce. So we have to overcome those challenges and encourage them to realize that college is an attainable goal that can be achieved if they put forth a little effort.

Because we are faced with the challenge of students not being prepared or knowing that college is an option, we have established various activities that assist students in building awareness of college, what life after high school holds for them. Some of those activities include assemblies that have a college focus. Staff members are encouraged to wear college paraphernalia; that is the theme of the given assembly. Throughout the school, you will see various banners and displays that will show the underclassmen the types of achievements that seniors have made. So it really means a lot to them to look on the banner and see somebody who they know and realize that person has been accepted into college and has even obtained scholarship money, so they think, “Well, that person can do it; I know that I can do it as well.”

Slide 2: Building relationships

Text: Marris Seymour, the manager of the Smaller Learning Communities program, discusses one component of the program: advisories. The goal of Smaller Learning Communities and advisories is to build a personalized learning environment. During advisories, teachers have opportunities to get to know the students and to support them throughout high school. Often teachers will talk with the students about aspects of college life such as what college classes are like compared to high school classes or what a completed college assignment should look like.

Audio: Smaller Learning Communities is a federal grant that was designated to five high schools in the Prince George’s County system to break down the large number of students to foster a more intimate educational program for students.

The overarching aim or goal for Smaller Learning Communities is to increase student achievement, but it’s also to increase the success rate of college readiness and college success, life after Crossland. And a couple of ways we do that, we support relationships between adults and students and we do that through what we call advisories, and it’s where adults on our campus get together with a designated group of students and talk about issues that are important to students as it pertains to preparing for college career or professional career.

Slide 3: Asking questions

Text: Mr. Seymour explains that most students at Crossland do not have parents who went to college, so they

cannot learn about college from them. The school tries to fill those gaps by providing detailed information to students. Students will often ask teachers questions about college, such as: “What it’s like to live in a dorm with a roommate?” These conversations take place formally in both advisories and other classes; teachers talk about college frequently with students.

Audio: The Smaller Learning Communities initiative here at Crossland has raised the awareness level of what it means to actually go to college, what it means to actually take an interest in someone else’s education past Crossland. In other words, it’s raising awareness of teachers that what I do actually does apply to a college-going situation for a real-life individual that may not be my own child.

It would not be unusual to walk into an advisory session and the discussion is [on] what I didn’t know about college. It would not be unusual to have an advisor talk about what does it mean to actually live in a dormitory, and you are hundreds of miles away from home, and you have never been away from home. In advisories, those issues that students don’t know where to find the right answers to, it offers an opportunity or a platform to just ask the questions that really don’t make sense, but do make sense to students.

Slide 4: Building confidence

Text: Niambi Stewart, instruction and testing coordinator, emphasizes the importance of being a “cheerleader” by helping students believe in themselves. She offers encouragement, ongoing support, and tools and techniques to help them strengthen their academic skills. When students begin to believe they can be successful, they feel a greater desire to go to college.

Audio: As instruction and testing coordinator, my ultimate goal is to help develop our students into goal-oriented and focused, productive citizens. And so, one of things that I do is I act as a cheerleader for them. They have state assessments that they need to pass, and in order to find out their scores, how well are they doing, what they need to continue to work on, and what they need to do, they normally come to me. I get students from every aspect, those who have passed it and who have done really, really well to those who haven’t done well at all. And so one of the things I try to do is pick those who haven’t done well up because they need to continue, they need to understand that this is not the end, that we are going to continue, that we are going to continue to work, we are going to work hard at it, and we are going to work together. So a lot of times I feel as if I need give them that hope that they may not be getting elsewhere. I give them tools. We talk about different ways, different techniques, different things that we are going to do to help them achieve their goal. And I think that when they go off to college, the support that I have given them here helps them in that they believe in themselves.

Slide 5: Participating in student government

Text: Edward Burroughs, a senior at Crossland, talks about his interest in student government and how this

activity helped to foster his future aspirations. Crossland High School has an active student government that engages with the community regarding issues relevant to the school and community. Students have the opportunity to go to the state capitol and participate in hearings in the legislature.

Audio: One of the most important programs that helped me want to get involved and want to go to college is the student government. We have a student government here that's unlike most. We have about maybe 30 or 40 members that are truly dedicated to the community. Student government would have to be that activity that interested me in college. Personally, I love Annapolis, our state capitol, and going and testifying on different bills that directly affect education. So that, I guess, just being involved in something that I enjoy forces me to like school.

Slide 6: Advanced Placement classes

Text: A senior at Crossland, Grace Bolomope, shares how Advanced Placement classes helped her understand what the expectations will be in college. She knows that AP classes can be more challenging and require a lot of studying. Because she has participated in several AP classes, she feels comfortable about entering college.

Audio: One of the programs that has helped me, and I know a lot of my friends, is AP classes. My principal tries to get everyone who is reading on the right level into at least one AP class. So by being enrolled in AP class, it gives you the experience that you need for college. A lot of people automatically assume that, "Oh, college is just too hard. I am not going to go. I am not going to be able to handle the classes." So by being put in college-level courses in high school, you get a taste of it, you get the feel of it, you know what your likes are, your dislikes. Personally, by taking AP classes—I took AP chemistry, I am taking it now this year—I found out that it's probably not the best idea for me. Of course, I am going to take it in college, but I am probably going to lean more towards biology and psychology. I also took AP biology and AP psychology. And at first, I wasn't interested at all in AP psychology, but I saw the textbooks, the materials, the way the lectures go. I got the taste of it, so I am really, really interested in it. And I know that a lot of my other friends too, by getting a taste of it, you set yourself in the setting. Even though we are in high school right now and it's hallways and it's a typical high school, once you get into an AP class, you feel like you are in college; you look at your teacher like a professor. Lectures are set up, you do your work like you are in college. You email your teacher. So by getting the taste of it, I really think it helps with the whole college process, just getting you into the setting and into the mode of it.

Slide 7: Principal's Leadership Team

Text: Areley Hernandez, a senior at Crossland, talks about her experience as part of the Principal's Leadership Team. One of the goals of the leadership team is to broaden the students' experiences, so each

year the team takes several trips. These trips are opportunities for students to gain a broader view of the world.

Audio: An activity that I am a part of that I would say has really helped me and my parents want to go to college or want to do something in the future is the Principal's Leadership Team. I was a part of that group tenth-grade year. And it's like, we go to different places of the world. Let's say, last year, we went to Canada, and we also have been to Gettysburg. So we have traveled around to many places. And they say, when you travel around the world, that's where you get more experience, you understand stuff better, you have an open mind to different things. And this has helped me because college is a whole different experience. So having already had that experience to try something different, it won't make me as scared to move on and go do something new.

Slide 8: Crossland: A college-going culture

Text: Mr. Seymour emphasizes that all teachers and staff members are committed to continually working to deepen the college-going culture at Crossland.

Audio: A college-going culture is not—like any other culture—it doesn't happen overnight; it's not easy work. And I think any person here on our staff at Crossland will tell you that it's taken time to get where we are. But we are constantly improving. We are polishing our game. We are making our craft better so that when you walk through the door, it feels like, looks like it really is a college-going culture.