

Agenda for Action

The College Board's "Green Book" defines what students need for success in college. Now Project EQuality is working with schools and colleges to help ensure that students are better prepared.

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Everyone agrees that much needs to be done to improve American secondary education. Before we all drown in a sea of rhetoric, however, it is imperative to chart a steady course beyond recommendations—to develop methods, practices, activities, and, equally important, the kinds of supportive attitudes that will help teachers teach and students learn more effectively.

The College Board, in a ten-year commitment to improving the quality of secondary education, established in 1980 the Educational EQuality Project. The project focuses on action—legislative action; institutional action; community action; parent, student, and citizen action—the kind of grassroots action that will enable the nation's schools to graduate students who are better prepared for college.

Two features in particular distinguish the EQuality project. First, its efforts are directed to the academic aspect of secondary schooling. Only when students are adequately prepared can they develop their full potential by taking advantage of all the resources colleges offer.

Second, the EQuality project believes that quality and equality are inseparably linked. The "E" and "Q" in the project's name are capitalized as an indication of the College Board's concern that the current rush for quality not occur at the cost of protecting equal access. And access means more than opening the

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door. It means providing students not only with the opportunity to get *in* college but the wherewithal to get *out*—to succeed and graduate with the knowledge and skills to continue their education or to enter and advance in the world of work.

Many students who enter the work force directly from high school will later pursue some form of postsecondary education. Even if they don't, students need to be as well prepared to enter the world of work as to enter college. That's the consensus of some 200 business leaders and educators who participated in a series of dialogues sponsored by the College Board and local business groups and educational institutions in five major U.S. cities. The same academic preparation considered necessary for success in college is also necessary for success in the marketplace, say business people. Studies by the Center for Public Resources and the Education Commission of the States Task Force on Education for Economic Growth have reached much the same conclusion.

In order to define the kind of academic preparation necessary for success in college, the EQuality project engaged some 1,400 school teachers and college faculty from all over the country in a two-year collaborative effort to reach agreement on the knowledge and skills that college-bound students need. Their collective judgment was published by the College Board last spring in the "Green Book," *Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do.*¹ The Green

Book describes, in terms of learning outcomes, the basic academic competencies and subjects that all students need to succeed in college-level work. It offers an agenda from which schools proceed to design curricula that will enable more students to learn what they need to know. Among the project's many efforts has been the broad dissemination of *Academic Preparation for College*. To date, the Green Book has been sent to educators, policy makers, and political leaders all over the country. Already it is being used in a variety of goal-setting, curriculum development, and career planning efforts in high schools and colleges. The EQuality project is now pursuing ways to ensure that more students acquire the learning outcomes in high school. Since the Green Book does not prescribe any courses or methods, the means of achieving the outcomes is left up to each locality to design within the context of its own particular experience, needs, and resources.

High School—College Collaboration

To help schools implement the Green Book, the College Board is currently supporting 13 model high school-college collaboratives across the country. Each is fairly unique in organization, composition, and development. Carefully selected, the participants represent a broad mix of institutions, both public and private, with respect to region, racial and ethnic background, financial resources, urban, suburban, and rural

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location. They have been identified as schools and colleges at various stages of collaboration. Some are just beginning and are suffering through the stages of initial planning; others have collaborated both formally and informally for the past three to five years. As part of the Models Program, they have all ex-

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pressed a willingness to share with each other their experiences and the fruits of their labors in planning, training, and program development. Common to all is an interest in increasing the number of students adequately prepared for higher education, as well as a recognition that this is not likely to happen without the general improvement of the academic institutions seeking to serve this purpose.

The planned activities of collaboratives invited initially to participate in this program reflect some specific concerns. For example:

- In Alabama, eight school systems and seven colleges and universities have formed the Jefferson County Educational Consortium to increase communication and work cooperatively within disciplines to define and support the most critical teaching. Meetings held during the past few years have not only brought together school and college people in each of the disciplines, but also leaders in education, business, and industry to determine how they may work together to improve the climate for education in their area.

- Since the mid-1970s, Yale University and the New Haven Public School System have collaborated in a program that has allowed 80 teachers each year to work with university professors to develop curriculum units that the teachers take back to their schools. Teacher Benjamin Gorman, who has participated in the program since 1978, describes it as a marriage of the classroom teacher's teaching skills and methodology with

the professor's skills in content and scholarship. "Personally it's provided an opportunity for growth as well as an opportunity to share ideas with fellow teachers," he says, adding, "It's been refreshing to bring new ideas and recent scholarship back to students."

- In South Carolina, the CYLUC-W consortium, consisting of Winthrop College and six feeder high schools in the area, have sought through a series of meetings between counselors, admissions officers, administrators, and teachers to provide a smoother transition from school to college.

- In California, the Santa Ana Unified School District, the tenth largest in the state, and the University of California at Irvine are focusing on early identification—working with 7th- and 8th-graders and high school students, to convince them of the importance of taking a more challenging academic course of study in high school. In the near future, 6th graders will be brought into the program. Reaching students early has a particular urgency in this school district where at least 43 percent of the children don't speak English. Eighty-four percent of the student body are minority children drawn from a large Spanish-speaking population, a recent influx of Vietnamese, and a declining black population. The overall goal of this collaborative is to increase the number of heretofore unidentified students who are prepared to go on to college.

- In Florida, Miami-Dade Community College is working with the Dade

County Schools, the fourth largest county school system in the United States, to reduce the dropout rate and proliferation of remedial courses that have dominated a significant part of its program. Schools and colleges are attempting to increase academic standards at both levels and to develop a long-range plan for reviewing the EQuality project's basic academic competencies and subject matter outcomes.

- In Oklahoma, the College of Arts and Sciences at Oklahoma State University is working with public school districts to develop a statewide consortium. Spurred by OSU, this statewide collaborative will develop programs to improve the academic quality of education in the many small town and rural schools scattered throughout the state, some in sparsely populated areas. To help deliver programs to both students and teachers, OSU plans to use its unique telecommunications capability.

- In Atlanta, the National Humanities Faculty is working with the Atlanta Public School System to give the schools the benefit of humanities scholars from across the nation. Specifically, this project is assisting one Atlanta high school in setting up a new magnet school in the humanities. It is also helping the language arts departments of the entire school system improve their curriculum, with particular emphasis on writing skills.

These and other members of the network of collaboratives² will share research, materials, and any other pertinent

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To stimulate further cross-communication among the different disciplines and between schools and colleges, the College Board's Office of Academic Affairs has launched a quarterly newsletter, *Academic Connections*.³ The intent of the publication is to provide interpretations of ongoing academic developments that will be immediately applicable to the work of teachers and academic administrators. Hopefully the newsletter can play an integrative role, linking

secondary and higher education, the various subject areas, and education itself to wider currents in American society.

Turning to its own Academic Advisory Committees, the EQuality project is asking the teachers and professors who sit on the six subject committees to develop advice on achieving the learning outcomes presented in *Academic Preparation for College*. Recognizing that there are many ways of working toward a particular group of outcomes, the committee members will identify

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alternate approaches based on actual, successful classroom programs.

Improving the reasoning competency of inner-city youth is the goal of a College Board sponsored effort in six major U.S. cities.¹ Following the recommendation of the University/Urban Schools National Task Force, as well data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the Scholastic Aptitude Test, the College Board launched this two-year effort to help

college-bound high school students, who currently perform at or below average, hone their reasoning and thinking skills. English and mathematics courses will provide instruction in five major categories of reasoning skills: observation, inference, generalization, organization, and evaluation. The project also includes efforts to help teachers understand the nature of reasoning, become familiar with available materials, and acquire skills in teaching reasoning that have been developed and implemented in each city.

In another effort to develop curriculum modules for teaching the nontraditional competencies, the College Board supported an exploratory program aimed at helping Hispanic high school students acquire listening skills. St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas added listening instruction to its seven-week summer program for some 150 migrant students, grades 9 through 12. Some 42 educators from all segments of the educational community also attended a conference on teaching students how to listen.

Through these and many other programs, the Educational EQuality Project is reaching out across the country, stimulating dialogues and school-college initiatives, conducting workshops for counselors, meeting with principals, superintendents, and librarians, and forming liaisons with professional organizations to stimulate a network of efforts to improve and support learning at national, state, and local levels.

Already, the Basic Academic Competencies have received widespread en-

dorsement by professional associations, state commissions and boards of regents, and the business community. During the remaining years of the decade, the College Board will continue to use its influence to get *Academic Preparation for College* adopted as the preferred pattern of preparation for college. The project will also conduct ongoing research in such areas as assessment, in-service training, and reasoning skills. Through all of these efforts and its decade-long commitment, the EQuality Project hopes to stimulate meaningful action that will go beyond the rhetoric of reports and recommendations and enable more students to succeed at higher education. □

¹The College Board, *Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do* (New York: The College Board, 1983).

²Other network collaboratives include: Cuyahoga Community College and the Cleveland Public Schools, North King County-Edmonds Coalition for High School/Community College/University Articulation in the state of Washington, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Milwaukee Public Schools, Chicago Public Schools and the Illinois Institute of Technology and the University of Chicago, Baltimore County Public Schools and area community colleges and universities, and the Newark, New Jersey Board of Education and Essex County College.

³To be placed on the mailing list, write to Office of Academic Affairs, The College Board, 888 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10106.

⁴Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, Minneapolis, New York, San Francisco.

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