

Gearing Up *for* College Readiness

Programs that are designed to help students make the transition to high school, graduate on time, and prepare for college form a solid foundation on which students can build a future.

Helping students make the transition to high school and preparing them for postsecondary learning is built into the day-to-day processes at Statesville (NC) High School. My staff members and I always strive to do what is best for the students. Because statistics indicate that the freshman class is always the largest and the senior class the smallest, we have implemented several transitional programs and processes that make the move from middle school to high school and beyond successful for the majority of our students. The programs we have in place help students make the transition to high school, be successful in high school, keep their eye on graduating on time, and be ready to go to college. The growth and improvement in our attendance and end-of-course (EOC) test scores has shown that we are on the right track. (See figure 1.)

Programs That Support

Freshman academy. The majority of our freshman classes are located in a particular area of our campus. With the exception of JROTC, gym, and fine arts classes, ninth-grade students enjoy the luxury of having all their classes in close proximity.

Smaller homerooms. Most of the time, ninth-grade homerooms have fewer than 20 students, which allows teachers to more closely monitor students' academic and behavioral issues. During the weekly homeroom period, students have the opportunity to ask questions and get extra help and mentoring from peers and teachers as well as have time to visit the guidance counselors.

FAST (Freshmen Achieving Successful Transition) Camp. During the summer, rising students from all Statesville's feeder schools are invited to attend an orientation that teaches academic success strategies for high school, take a tour of the campus, participate in icebreakers,



GOALS TAKE ACTION THINK

MAKE PLANS SET



ACHIEVE DREAM

WHAT WILL YOU DO TOMORROW?

WHAT WILL YOU DO TOMORROW? MAKE PLANS SET GOALS

and meet their teachers and classmates. On the last day of the camp, students attend a commitment

celebration in the auditorium. Students are presented with Commitment to Graduate T-shirts that have the year of their anticipated graduation date.

Commitment days. Throughout the school year, students are asked to wear their Commitment to Graduate T-shirts to remind themselves of their promise to graduate on time.

Response to intervention (RTI). Students also have a weekly opportunity to discuss their progress in all classes. Students discuss their progress with their subject teachers, homeroom teachers, and if the need arises, with their guidance counselors. If students are failing a class, direct interventions are put in place to help those students get back on track.

Senior mentors. Seniors who have above-average GPAs, are leaders on campus and in the community, and are willing to work with ninth graders for the entire school year can serve as mentors. At the end of their junior year, interested students sign up to volunteer and receive information and training to help incoming ninth graders make the transition from middle school to high school.

Senior mentors work in FAST Camp; help with registration and curriculum fairs; and assist in freshmen homerooms with all the adviser-protégé activities, tutoring, and mentoring during the school year. This program provides support for struggling freshmen and gives mentors a chance to be leaders.

Community outreach. Statesville has rallied the support of community organizations that provide services to students, including Boys & Girls Club, Dream Builders Communications, Statesville Housing Authority, NAACP Education Committee, Weed & Seed, and Mi Familia Institute.

GEAR UP

Statesville has been a GEAR UP school for the past three years. This initiative began several years ago at one of our feeder schools and is now part of our support system

at Statesville. GEAR UP North Carolina is a targeted early-intervention initiative in partnership with College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC) that increases the college-going rate in the state and emphasizes reaching first-generation college students. GEAR UP services are available to all Statesville students. Parents and students can work with guidance counselors, other parents, and staff members to complete college applications, apply for financial aid, and explore careers using the students' CFNC accounts.

The GEAR UP Resource Center is housed on our campus in one of our computer labs and operates on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:30–7:30 p.m.

Clear Focus

To support the efforts of GEAR UP, my staff and I felt that more information about college and postsecondary opportunities was needed to match our focus on strategies and best practices that would entice students to stay in school and begin thinking about college regularly. Students and parents needed to see the value of higher education more frequently and presented in a variety of ways. They needed a connection that would afford opportunities for interaction and participation.

THE PARENT ALLIANCE GROUP

The Parent Alliance Group was established to provide parents with additional information about college, serve as a support group for parents and students, and increase the number of parents participating in school activities. The group has established an executive board that meets monthly and has begun soliciting additional members. The board has also committed to join other campus parent organizations and has committed to staff the GEAR UP Resource Center and support staff members.

COLLEGE READINESS WORKSHOPS

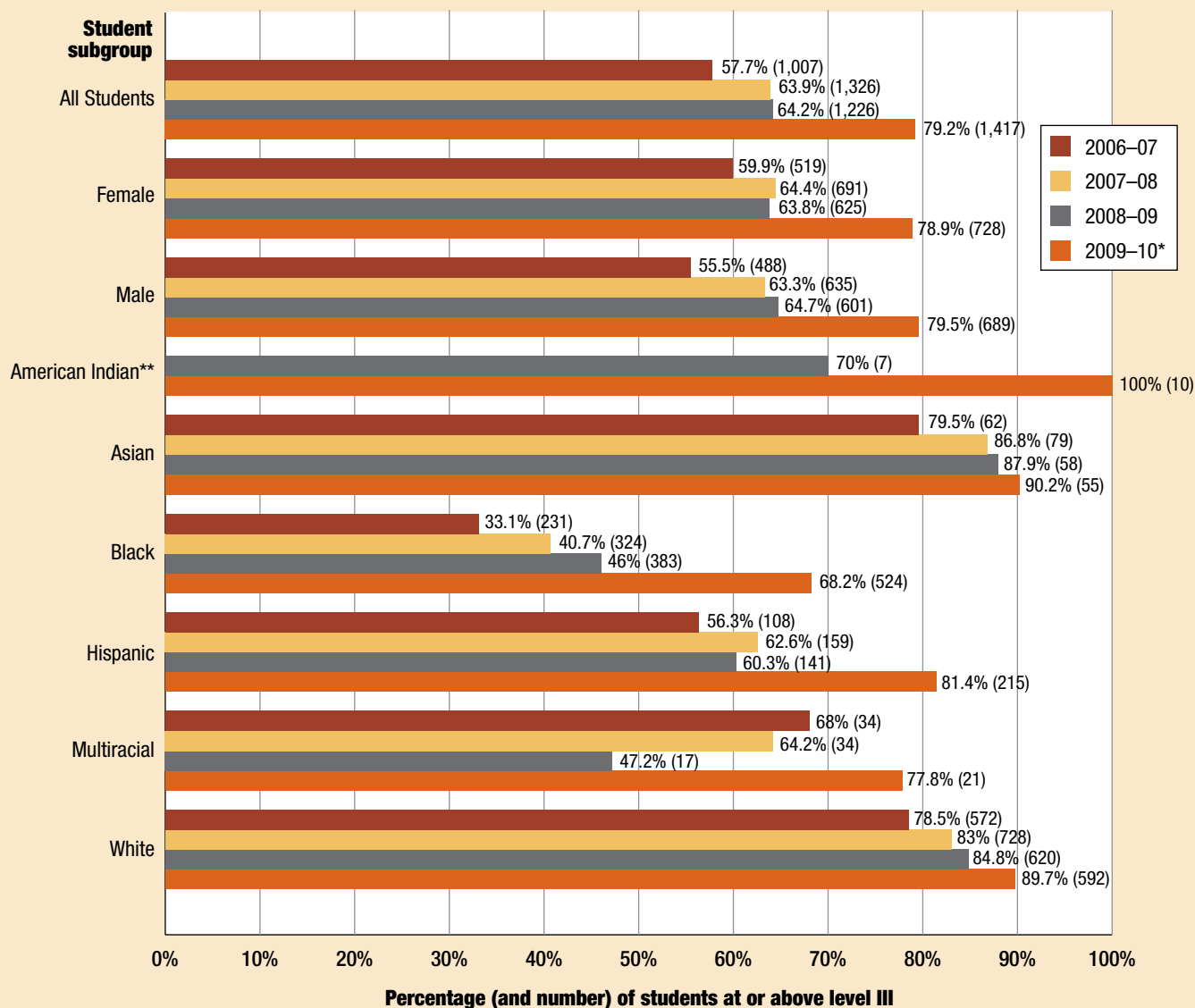
Other useful resources for parents and students are the new college readiness workshops being held each month in the school media center. All topics are geared toward giving students and parents information and materials about college expenses and financing to help ensure that students will be able to attend college. The workshops are facilitated

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PLANS TAKE ACTION THINK ACHIEVE DREAM WHAT WILL YOU DO TOMORROW? MAKE PLANS SET GOALS TAKE ACTION

Figure 1
**Disaggregated School Performance Data for Statesville (NC)
 High School**

Students at or Above Level III on End-of-Course Tests



*2009-10 is the first year that retests were allowed.

**In other years, the population in this subgroup was too small to report numbers.

Statesville High School STATESVILLE, NC

Grades: 9–12

Enrollment: 1,191

Demographics: 39% White, 46% Black, 12% Hispanic, 3% Asian

Administrative team: 1 principal, 3 assistant principals, 1 freshman academy director

Faculty: 91 staff members



WHAT WILL YOU DO TOMORROW? MAKE PLANS SET GOALS TAKE ACTION THINK ACHIEVE DREAM WHAT WILL YOU DO

by the guidance department and the campus GEAR UP coordinator.

During each workshop, parents and students in all grade levels receive handouts and learn about additional resources at their disposal. The workshops also incorporate motivational speakers, a college fair, and panel discussions with parents and students. The very last workshop will be a time to reflect on the successes and opportunities for improvements in the process. The primary purpose of the workshops is to help students get ready for college and to steer them through the application process with the assistance of their homeroom teachers, guidance counselors, and parents.

- **Workshop 1:** Study skills/academic preparation. Students and parents received an overview of information about the standard course of study, the importance of enrolling in honors and AP classes; weighted and unweighted GPA calculations as they affect class rank; and tips on taking advantage of tutoring opportunities at Statesville and within the community. (This workshop has already been presented.)
- **Workshop 2:** Testing tips (PSAT, SAT, ACT, and EOC).
- **Workshop 3:** The college application process.
- **Workshop 4:** College fair.
- **Workshop 5:** Student athletes.
- **Workshop 6:** Financial aid opportunities.
- **Workshop 7:** College student panel discussion.
- **Workshop 8:** Motivational speakers.
- **Workshop 9:** Wrap-up.

College Readiness Boot Camp

The College Readiness Boot Camp is designed specifically for the class of 2011. Each senior is given a brochure that outlines the 12 college readiness workshops for the 2010–11 school year. The brochure includes a list of ACT/SAT test dates, an outline of scheduled times for parent conferences and guidance counselor appointments, and a college readiness checklist. The workshop titles are:

- **Workshop 1:** Matching career interests with college choices

- **Workshop 2:** Beginning the college application process
- **Workshop 3:** Preparing for the college entrance exams
- **Workshop 4:** Testing strategies
- **Workshop 5:** Essay writing
- **Workshop 6:** Completing college applications during College Application Week
- **Workshop 7:** Researching and applying for scholarships
- **Workshop 8:** Applying for financial aid
- **Workshop 9:** Managing money
- **Workshop 10:** Life skills
- **Workshop 11:** Developing effective study habits
- **Workshop 12:** Researching summer opportunities.



A Solid Foundation

I am proud of the way that all the components that Statesville has implemented come together to form a solid foundation for students and their families as they explore postsecondary options. The administrators, students, staff and faculty members, parents, and community stakeholders have worked tirelessly to ensure that Statesville has integrated best practices, has the flexibility to adjust to the challenges of the 21st century, has a commitment to community service, and has the willingness to celebrate the diversity that makes Statesville a reflection of current society. **PL**

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