

Self-Assessment of Student and Family Communications about College Readiness and Success

Purpose:

This self-assessment is for any school, agency, or organization seeking to analyze and improve its communications to students and families about college readiness and success.

Development History:

This self-assessment was originally developed by the Graduate NYC! External Awareness Team in the spring of 2011. Graduate NYC! is a collaboration supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that brings together resources of the New York City Mayor's Office, the NYC Department of Education (DOE), the City University of New York (CUNY), other city agencies, and an extensive group of local community and school-based organizations. The goals of the initiative are to increase the number of students who graduate from New York City public schools ready for college level work and to increase the number of students from New York City who complete a college degree.

The External Awareness Team, convened from January through August 2011, worked toward the alignment and improvement of communications that students and families in New York City receive about college readiness and success. This self-assessment was designed using research from: "DOE-CUNY College Readiness and Success Working Group: Subcommittee Literature Reviews," "Framework: Information, Skills, Actions" from the Graduate NYC! CAPA Committee, "College Readiness: A View from (CUNY) Collaborative Programs," and David Conley's "Rethinking College Readiness."

Instructions:

Select one print or electronic material that your school/agency/organization uses to communicate with students and families about college readiness and success (e.g. brochure, email, etc.). Complete the following questions in order to help determine both the strengths of this material, and the ways that you may be able to improve its effectiveness. You can also complete one self-assessment for all the print and electronic materials your organization uses, so that you can identify the overall strengths and areas of weakness in your larger communication strategy.

This self-assessment contains questions divided into the following sections:

- Communication Plan
- Communication Plan Self-Assessment
- Content of the Material(s)
- Content Self-Assessment
- Summary Self-Assessment

Before you begin, identify the name of the material(s) for which you will be completing the self-assessment:

COMMUNICATION PLAN:

1. Who is the intended audience for this material(s)? (Check all that apply)

- Elementary School students
 - Families of Elementary School students
 - Middle School students
 - Families of Middle School students
 - High School students (if applicable, specify HS grade: _____)
 - Families of High School students
 - Students who have already earned an HS Diploma or GED
 - Students not currently enrolled in high school or college (i.e. “disconnected youth”)
 - Non-English speakers
 - Your program’s current/former participants and families only
 - Residents of a particular geographic region only (e.g. NYC)
 - Other (please specify:)
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2. In which languages is this material(s) available? (Check all that apply)

- Arabic
 - Bengali
 - Chinese
 - English
 - Haitian Creole
 - French
 - Korean
 - Russian
 - Spanish
 - Urdu
 - Other (please specify:)
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3. What method(s) are being used to communicate this material(s) to students and/or families?
(Check all that apply)

- Direct Mail (Newsletters and/or letters)
- Brochure

- Guide (Instructions or List)
- Poster
- Website
- Email (including E-Newsletter)
- Text message
- Post on social networking site (*please identify:* _____)
- In person, through workshops
- In person, through one-on-one sessions
- Other (*please specify:*)

COMMUNICATION PLAN Self-Assessment:

4. Is this material(s) appropriately tailored towards its intended audience (take into account the languages in which the material(s) is available, the reading level of the text, the use of any “insider” terminology, etc.)?
- Not tailored
 - Somewhat tailored
 - Mostly tailored
 - Completely tailored

If you did not select “Completely tailored,” how could you change the material(s) to meet the needs of your intended audience?

5. Given what you know about how to communicate successfully with students and/or families, are the methods being used to communicate this material(s) the most effective for your intended audience? If not, what other communication methods might you consider using?

**Note: You may want to survey or hold focus groups with your program participants and families, as well as read research regarding methods of communication preferred by your target audiences, in order to gather information about how to communicate most effectively with the populations you serve.*

CONTENT of the Material(s):

6. Academic Preparation: What information about academic preparation, with regards to high school graduation and college readiness, does this material(s) include? (*Check all that apply*)

- Course/credit requirements for HS graduation
- Courses recommended for college admission (i.e. 4 years of math)
- Importance of experiencing “college prep” classes (e.g. AP, College Now, IB)

Importance of target academic performance, with regards to:

- GPA (at least 80%)
 - Regents test scores¹
 - SAT/ACT test scores¹
 - Academic expectations of college-level courses (i.e. skills/competencies required by college professors)
 - None
 - Other (*please specify:*)
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7. College- Ready Behaviors: What information about student behaviors necessary for college readiness does this material(s) include? (*Check all that apply*)

- Time Management Skills
Successfully using tools to estimate the amount of time needed to accomplish tasks; ability to prioritize personal and academic responsibilities
- Study Skills
Successful use of studying techniques and tools; ability to participate successfully in a study group; ability to assist and teach others
- Communication Skills
Ability to communicate ideas clearly in an effective manner; ability to use communication techniques/concepts to negotiate and resolve conflicts; development of strong oral and written communication skills
- Self Awareness & Self Advocacy
Recognition of self as an independent, self-reliant learner who knows when and how to seek help when needed; development of a sense of purpose and ability to support that purpose
- Persistence & Goal Setting
Understanding of why and how pursuit of higher education fits into personal goals and aspirations; ability to exercise resiliency when plans do not work out as expected (includes maintaining high attendance rate 90% in high school)

¹ For Regents and SAT/ACT scores needed to place into college-level courses at CUNY, see: <http://www.cuny.edu/academics/testing/cuny-assessment-tests/admissions-requirements.html>

- None
 - Other (please specify:)
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8. College Awareness, Application, & Admission: What information about college awareness, application, and admission requirements does this material(s) include? (Check all that apply)

- Encouragement of college aspirations for all students
 - Finding the right college match
 - College visits
 - Materials needed for application
 - Application deadlines
 - None
 - Other (please specify:)
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9. Financial Aid Information: What information about financial aid does this material(s) include? (Check all that apply)

- Cost of college information (includes calculating the cost of tuition, fees, books, travel, room & board and other expenses, as well as understanding and comparing financial aid awards)
 - FAFSA application information
 - Scholarship application information
 - Loan application information
 - Financial planning information
 - None
 - Other (please specify:)
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10. Advising Services Information: What information about available advising services does this material(s) include? (Check all that apply)

- Description of available advising services (e.g. Admissions office, Financial Aid Office, HS Guidance Counselor, etc)
- Instructions for connecting to a local advisor/counselor
- Instructions for connecting to a virtual advisor available on this school/agency/organization's website
- None

Please describe details of above selection, if applicable:

CONTENT Self-Assessment:

11. Does this material(s) have a clear “call to action” (i.e. a next step that the reader must complete, like contacting an advisor or school counselor, filling out an application, sending an email, etc.)? If so, what is the “call to action”? If not, how could you clarify the concrete next steps that the reader should complete?

12. Rate the strength (or thoroughness) of each content area of this material(s):

Content Area	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Academic Preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
College-Ready Behaviors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
College Awareness, Application, & Admission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial Aid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advising Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For those content areas designated above as less than “Strong,” how could you change the material(s) to improve the information provided?

SUMMARY SELF-ASSESSMENT:

13. Given the goal of communicating information about college readiness and success, what is a major strength of this material(s)?

How can this strength be applied to your school/agency/organization's other communications?

14. Given your responses to Questions # 5 and 12, regarding the weaknesses in this material(s)'s content and communication method, what are the next steps you will take to address and improve these weaknesses?
