

DOINGWHATWORKS



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Walking Students Through the Application Process

Crossland High School, Maryland • March 2010

Topic: Helping Students Navigate the Path to College
Practice: Assist With College Entry

Highlights

- In this video the teacher of a College Summit class talks about the importance of providing support for seniors as they apply to college. This comprehensive high school requires all seniors to take the College Summit class as the school expects all students to go to college.
- In the College Summit class, students complete a personal statement, explore different colleges, and submit their college applications.
- Students develop and maintain an online portfolio that facilitates the college application process.
- Many schools begin these activities during the junior year. Schools should consider their students' timelines in deciding when to commence activities associated with college applications.

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:

- 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

I am Michael Richardson. I am the College Summit teacher at Crossland High School.

We introduced College Summit in Crossland High School around 2006, and in the beginning we had about three or four classes of seniors that were taking this class. And this class is devoted to one thing; it's devoted to making sure that all the seniors understand the college application process, that they have someone, a teacher of a class walking with them step-by-step as they apply to colleges and apply for financial aid. Everything we do in College Summit is directed to that one goal of getting these students funding to go to college and getting them accepted into a college that fits their needs. We have college reps come and talk to our class. We work on applications together. We do all the work that is necessary to find funding and to get admitted into a college in that class. And I think that probably this is one of the most important and significant classes that the senior takes, and that's why we decided to make this a compulsory course.

We will have them start writing the personal statement. Now, the personal statement is actually one of the components of almost all college applications, but we like to use a personal statement as a chance for the students to explore their past, their present, and then what they want in the future. We take different

personality tests to find out what kind of career they might be suited for and what their interests are. We have several personality inventories and career inventories that they actually will complete in the first couple of months of the senior year.

And from there we begin to say, okay, now since you have found out what your interests are, you have explored it in writing and you have taken these personality tests to find out what it is that makes you what you are, and now let's find out what school would be the best one for you to develop that. And so from the personal statement, they then begin looking at, okay, this is what I want to do in my life, this is the major I want—what schools offer that?

Before Thanksgiving, they should have visited the three or four colleges that are on their short list. And with that short list, we tell them to choose one or two colleges that are reach colleges, colleges that might be difficult for them to get into but it's their ultimate, their dream colleges. We have them look at two or three colleges that are in state, where they will pay the least amount of tuition. And we have them look at one or two colleges that are their safety picks, colleges that they know they can get into; all the qualifications that college demands, they have it. And so they try to look at that entire spectrum. And we have college visits that we organize, and many times they will do it on their own.

After they have found the colleges that they think are the right fit for them, we make sure they get applications. We download applications online. We have them do them by hand and then type them in and submit those applications online.

One of the most incredible tools that have made such a big difference in helping us lead our students through the college application process is students do an online portfolio. That way, when they do their personal statement, they put it online, they put their resume online, they put every aspect that they need, their transcripts, everything that they need to complete a college application, they can actually save it online. And that way when I go home, I can open up my computer and I can read their personal statements. And I can comment on them, and that gives us also a communication, so I communicate with them back and forth about what they need to do. The online portfolio also has a scholarship search, so our students can seek out scholarships that match maybe their qualifications.

The good thing about the fact that we make all of our seniors take this course, and make them apply to colleges together, is we get to find those students, identify those that are a little intimidated by it—they have never seen anything like this before. And you know we really do, we make it a part of every teacher's job here, that work with seniors, to walk with them step by step and to make sure that no one is left behind.