

Extraordinary High Schools Building Extraordinary College Access

From 2019-2023, we worked with a network of 49 schools to develop college access interventions and multiyear improvement processes that replaced the ordinary – historic exclusion of Black, Latino/a/x, and economically disadvantaged students – with equitable opportunity. In only four years, these high schools made systemic changes that supported student journeys to and through college.



Our Approach



Curated Change Packages

Implement proven practices without starting from scratch. Use what's working to develop tailored, well-vetted strategies.



Multidisciplinary Improvement Teams

Build capacity by earning trust and buy-in from cross-department teams that practice then help scale proven changes.



Intentional Learning Journeys

Focus on what matters most for each school, class, and student by investigating the current system, testing promising change, and consolidating learning.



Tailored Coaching & Data Tracking

Create sustainable, timely data collection and analysis processes to guide cross-department coaching.

Why It Matters

Equitable outcomes require change. Mindset change. Practice change. Systems change. Unless schools intentionally build cultures of learning and improvement with equity as their foundation, those changes won't happen.

66%

of students actually believe they will make it to college even though 74% would like to – a gap of 8%

38%

of students who thought their families could not afford to go to college were enrolled three years after high school compared to 58% of students who thought their families could afford it – a 20% gap

\$4B+

dollars were left on the table in 2023 due to incomplete FAFSA applications and unutilized college funding

Where We Focused

The four primary drivers of the NTN College Access Network were collaboratively designed with school teams to ensure that each and all students have postsecondary choices.



Junior Exploration & Planning

Supporting 11th grade students as they develop a wishlist and plan for postsecondary options.



Postsecondary Applications

Coaching students to submit 3+ college applications to increase their likelihood of best postsecondary fit and match.



Financial Access

Helping all students, especially those who are economically disadvantaged, complete a financial aid application.



Senior Strong Finish

Increasing the likelihood students enroll the fall immediately after their senior year.



The NTN College Access Network has provided our district with an effective framework for providing equitable access to postsecondary opportunities and resources. More important, by using improvement science we have been able to increase the level of active participation and engagement of not only the students and families, but also the teachers and campus administrators who work with them daily.

Erica Hill | District Sponsor, Manor Independent School District

Our Impact:

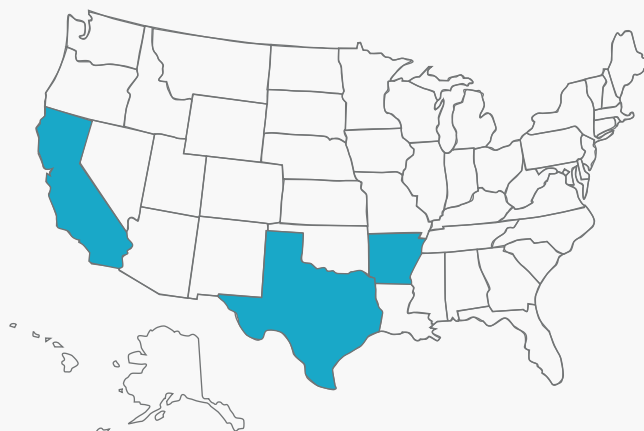
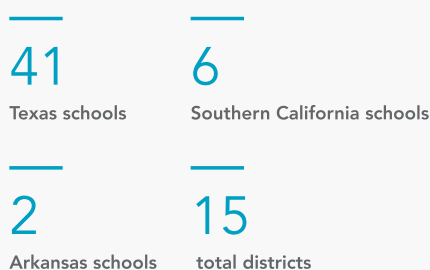
High Schools Leading Equitable Change

By focusing on the most influential drivers of well-matched postsecondary enrollment, we helped schools open more doors to college for each and all students.



Our Reach

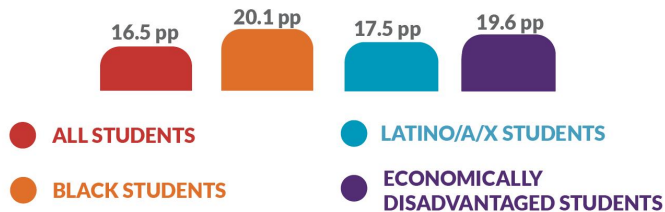
We started with three districts in Texas, growing our network to 49 schools committed to increasing well-matched postsecondary enrollment.



Student Outcomes

Network improvement teams tested and implemented change ideas that increased well-matched enrollment rates.

INCREASE IN PERCENTAGE OF SENIORS COMPLETING 3+ POSTSECONDARY APPLICATIONS FROM CLASS OF 2021 TO CLASS OF 2023



16.5

point overall increase in the percentage of students completing 3+ postsecondary applications from 2021 to 2023, with Latino/a/x students reaching a 17.5 point increase, economically disadvantaged students reaching a 19.6 point increase, and Black students reaching a 20.1 point increase.

19

percentage point increase in FAFSA completion from pre-network baseline to Class of 2023

6.8

percentage point increase in postsecondary enrollment rates from Class of 2021 to Class of 2023

Participant Experience

Belonging to a network of like-minded educators fostered a sense of purposeful community, the power to enact change that wouldn't be possible alone, and the collective commitment to continue.

93%

of network participants believe this work is making a difference

92%

of network participants believe the network's learning and improvement process is valuable

“

[Being a part of the NTN College Access Network] has meant a huge amount for my individual growth and the growth of my campus. Not only did we learn a lot about how to ensure that our students are well-matched, [...] but we also learned how to look at problems in a different way.

Holly Garza | Principal, Clint Early College Academy

Case Study:

Fabens High School

Fabens, Texas

~600 students

99% minority enrollment

86% of students are economically disadvantaged



Launch

Students and families had limited exposure to college applications, financial aid options, and FAFSA.

A cross-department, skills-diverse team was formed to test practices and build internal buy-in.

Investigate

Families had concerns about sharing the personal information such as income taxes to apply.

Students and families weren't sure how staying on top of academics in a college setting would work.

Students assumed their only options were working to save money for school or taking out loans.

Focus/Test

Communications tactics included classroom conversations, letters sent home, and student surveys.

School-wide workshops ensured every high school student completed the FAFSA.

Consolidate

Support was cultivated by actively seeking staff involvement through conversations and classroom participation.

Strategies were refined based on feedback and failures, promoting a culture of learning and improvement.

FAFSA completion has become a standard expectation for students throughout their high school experience.

Change The Culture and The Outcomes Follow

By making FAFSA completion a standard expectation for every student — particularly those who are Black, Latino/a/x, and economically disadvantaged — Fabens High School empowers students' independence and creates a firm foundation for equitable college access.

95%

FAFSA completion, a 68 percentage point increase from pre-network baseline

71.2%

of seniors applied to 3+ postsecondary options in 2022-2023

11

percentage point increase in seamless college enrollment from Class of 2022 to Class of 2023

“

We've had things that didn't work out well. We didn't give up. We asked why it didn't work and how we could make it better. "Now we know parents don't go to basketball games. How else can we reach them?"

Juanita Sotelo

Teacher, STUCO Advisor,
Fabens High School

“

If we had a problem, we could reach out to the NTN team and ask for help. They would come in, back us up, and move things forward. Because what is more important than these kids getting out of here with a plan?

Lorena Flores

CVECHS Counselor, AP Coordinator,
Fabens High School

“

I would always put the FAFSA off to the side. We know about it, but we don't act upon it. It's good the school is taking each student out to get it done. FAFSA is important to help students in need.

Manny

Student,
Fabens High School

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