What Participating Students Say About the College Bound Program at Boston College

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WHAT PARTICIPATING STUDENTS SAY ABOUT THE COLLEGE BOUND PROGRAM AT BOSTON COLLEGE

Dissertation
by
JAMES JOHN GENEROSO JR.

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The focus of this dissertation is the student voice in College Bound (CB), a pre-college preparation program at Boston College. College Bound has existed on the Boston College campus for more than twenty years as an academic enrichment and supportive program that benefits urban students from two Boston Public high schools. The two essential questions of the research are “What do students say they learn at CB?” and “What suggestions do students have to improve the CB Program?” Literature about the importance of the student voice in the educational enterprise is reviewed as a means of giving context to the study. Primary data included student surveys (n=29), interviews (n=12), and focus groups (n=3). Other sources utilized included field notes and observations of the researcher as participant-observer, in addition to official College Bound documents. The constant comparative method was used to analyze data from the primary data sources. Data was also analyzed by data type and findings were presented thematically. Major findings included: CB students know a lot of what is going on and do not attend CB as empty vessels, but bring their own knowledge and experience to the CB Program. Students say they learn academic self-discipline, a more focused search for potential colleges to attend, and value their experience attending the CB program on the Boston College campus. Suggestions for improving the CB Program include: creating a regular schedule, re-establishing a community meeting experience, ensuring a consistent connection with their Boston College mentors, and providing more field trips to other colleges and museums. Participating student voices should be encouraged and respected as an important source of information in educational programs that exist to benefit those very students.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Janice Jackson for her guidance and suggestions throughout the entire dissertation process. Dr. Jackson allowed me to explore the College Bound idea for many months and, as we both had some experience with the College Bound Program, she suggested a project which led to a focus on the student voice. For this suggestion alone, I was professionally enriched as it also helped me perform my high school principal role with the notion of student voice at the forefront of my thinking.

Professor George Ladd, the founding director of the College Bound Program at Boston College, could not have been more helpful with his knowledge and experience of the Program. Professor Ladd responded to my queries via email or telephone quickly and cogently. Dr. Ladd assisted hundreds of Boston public high school students reach their next level of education with more confidence and ability. His knowledge of college preparation programs is unsurpassed, and his social concern for students who require extra support at the high school level is evident in the College Bound Program. His contribution to Boston College and the Boston Public Schools has been immense.

Dr. Elizabeth Sparks, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, allowed me an extension and gave me the necessary support to complete my work in the past year. I will always be grateful for her patience and understanding.
Dedication

To my wife, Carol, who supported this endeavor from the beginning. Her excellent editing skills will assist readers in making sense of what I tried to say.
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Chapter I

Introduction

Post-secondary education has become essential for individuals to participate in the information based economies in today’s modern world. The vast social and technological infrastructure that exists in the developed world requires educated citizens, if that infrastructure of the “knowledge society” is to be maintained and improved. The late Peter Drucker, a world-renowned international business consultant, wrote that “the new jobs of the knowledge worker require higher qualifications. They require a good deal of formal education and the ability to acquire and apply theoretical and analytical knowledge. Above all, they require continual learning” (Drucker, 2001, p. 305). In addition to the need for continuous education for economic viability, the future of democracy requires pro-active citizens who are receptive to new ideas and connected to their communities.

A college education can and does provide many of these economic, social, and individual experiences for students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Studies have concluded that the college experience cultivates the individual intellect, contributes to the student’s personal development, and prepares individuals both for citizenship in a democracy and participation in the workforce (Kezar, 1997; Knox, Lindsay, & Kolb, 1993; Yamamura et al., 2010). More than thirty years ago, a major conference on the effects of college produced evidence that strongly supports the notion that a college education “changes an individual’s personality, attitudes, motivation, and values” (Solmon & Taubman, 1973).
Continued education beyond secondary school contributes social benefits as well. College graduates are more engaged in civic matters such as voting and running for public office. These same graduates are twice as likely to be involved in the community than those who have not pursued post-secondary education (Kezar, 1997). It could be argued that the social fabric of society is enhanced when more people attend college.

As the importance of attending college increases in our integrated world economy, it behooves educators to empower students to discover for themselves reasons for attending college. This activist learning would, in turn, motivate students to acquire the essential information to follow through on both the application to college and securing the necessary financial aid resources to attend (Cabrera, 2006; Johnson, 1991).

Most students have heard the economic message that education matters. Each successive level of education completed is associated with an increase in earnings. College graduates earn between 20 and 40 percent more money over their lifetime than people who do not attend college (Education Pays, 2010; The Big Payoff, 2002). Secondary school students should also understand that higher education achievement could lead to a better lifestyle as well as more choices in life (Boyer, 1987; Kezar, 1997; The Condition of Education 2003). One could conclude that all societies, and particularly those in the developed world, should maximize the number of people attending college (Reed, 2001).

Secondary students from low socio-economic status (SES) households, however, are less likely than their middle and high-income peers to enroll in four year colleges (Shaw et al. 2009; Tierney, 2002; Yun & Moreno, 2006). These students need more
advice and counseling relevant to 1) enrolling in the proper set of rigorous high school courses; 2) systematic gathering of reliable, first hand information about specific colleges; 3) the elements necessary to complete a college application; and 4) the process of obtaining financial aid (*The Condition of Education*, 2003; Luna De La Rosa, 2006; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002).

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has recognized the lack of relevant information regarding college knowledge and acted on it. The NAACP has co-sponsored a “National Day of College Preparation” in the past. In 2002, the National Day included test preparation workshops sponsored by the Princeton Review and financial aid workshops sponsored by the Sallie Mae Foundation. In the words of Kweisi Mfume, then President and CEO of the NAACP:

> It is extremely important to the NAACP to . . . stress to young people and their parents the significance of a college education. Studies show that many people of color lack basic information about the college admissions process and the types of available financial aid (*Overflow Crowds*, 2002).

Since 2002, the Youth and College Division of the NAACP has co-sponsored similar events in 2004 and 2006 (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nyc_divine9/message/3624).

While some policymakers suggest a dilemma exists as to whether academic preparation or money is the primary obstacle for low-income students, for most of these students the two issues cannot be easily separated (Burd, 2002; Carter & Robinson, 2002; Farmer-Hinton, 2008). Other research concludes that if financial aid is adequate, then low-income high school graduates who are college-qualified will enroll in four-year colleges regardless of the level of their parents’ education (*Empty Promises*, 2002).
Sufficient relevant information in curriculum choices and financial aid appear equally important for all students who aspire to attend college (Cavanaugh, 2004; Luna De La Rosa 2006; Yun & Moreno, 2006).

Students from all SES levels are intimidated by the process of completing a college application and the perplexing process of applying for financial aid. One reporter discovered that students from high SES backgrounds consider college a birthright, but for many urban students from low SES backgrounds college attendance is a visit to a foreign world (Pappano, 2003). Whereas students from higher SES levels receive assistance from parents and counselors, and have access to superior school resources, students from low SES levels have to fend for themselves for much of the information (Carter & Robinson, 2002; Kopkowski, 2005; Supiano, 2009; Venezia & Kirst, 2005;).

For guidance counselors who work with students from low SES backgrounds, their school caseloads are so burdened with multiple issues—both academic and non-academic—that counselors with the best intentions cannot adequately serve their low SES students regarding the possible range of post-secondary options (Savitz-Romer, 2004). The decision to attend college is so important for students in families from low SES backgrounds, that Hossler et al. (1999) wonder why they are left so often to navigate the process with minimal guidance.

II. Statement of the Problem

Limited Access to College. Nearly two-thirds of American high school seniors continue their post-secondary education. Although this figure may sound impressive, it masks discrepancies in access and retention rates between race and income levels (McDonough,
1997). In fact, the persistence of economic poverty in the United States is one of the major reasons that many students from low SES backgrounds are not prepared adequately for post-secondary careers (Bowen et al., 2005).

Recent statistics from the federal government tell us that, due to the current recession, the poverty rate among children under 18 is now 20.7 %, up from 19 % in 2008 (U.S Department of Commerce, 2010). Instead of these students receiving more, chances are they will receive fewer resources in the future. If we are serious about closing the achievement gap in schools, educators need to focus on the living conditions of the twenty percent of students who live in poverty. It should come as no surprise that the achievement gap is almost directly reflected in the poverty rate. In New Jersey in 2010, newspapers reported that on the wide variation in standardized test scores “Poverty played a key role; about 60 percent of low-income children did not meet standards for third grade language arts, compared with 30 percent of those from economically stable families. Schools and families have struggled to close these gaps for years” (Brody & Alex, 2011).

A special analysis about High Poverty Schools carried out by the United States Department of Education in 2010 underscores this disparity between income levels and post-secondary access (nces.edu.gov/programs/coe/2010/analysis/figure11.asp). Administrators in schools reported that when a school has more than 76% of its students qualify for free and reduced lunch, the attendance rate for four year colleges for those graduates is only 28% as opposed to 52% who attend four year colleges from more affluent secondary schools. (See graph next page).
Figure 11. Administrator reports of the average percentage of 12th-graders from secondary public schools graduating high school and the average percentage of graduates attending 4-year institutions, by percentage of students in school eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL): School year 2007–08

As observed from the graph on the previous page, access to college still is not a level playing field for all students in secondary schools. Across all achievement levels, students from the lowest SES groups are less likely to apply or to attend college than are high SES students (Carter & Robinson, 2002; Yamamura et al., 2010). Among the high ability, low SES students, only 60% of these students attended college, while 86% of the high ability, high SES students attended (McDonough, 1997). Students of color and students from low SES backgrounds, when they do attend college, are more likely to attend “low prestige” colleges or those with the highest dropout rates and the least amount of student support (Deil-Amen and Tevis, 2010; Levine, 1997).

In contrast, for students from families in high SES households, the college decision is a planned, long-term investment. Higher income households generally have a parent (or parents) who have either been to college themselves, or can afford the educational investment for their children. As a result, students from the higher SES households have a distinct advantage when applying to colleges (McDonough, 1997; Shaw et al., 2009).

This study will document how students from low SES backgrounds equip themselves with the essential knowledge to prepare for the application to college. The intent is to demonstrate how students from two Boston public high schools utilize the College Bound Program at Boston College for college readiness. Part of the College Bound Program helps participating students learn more about requirements and procedures for applying to and succeeding at four year colleges.

Students will generate ideas about essential “college knowledge” and will participate in interviews, surveys, and focus groups. By discussing these matters with
College Bound high school students at Boston College, much can be learned from students themselves about what works for them in the College Bound Program.

The purpose of this study is to discover what students say they are learning at College Bound, a college preparation program at Boston College.

The essential research questions in this study are:

1. What do students tell us they are learning about the college “pathway” at the College Bound Program at Boston College?

2. What recommendations or suggestions do students offer to enhance or improve the College Bound Program for themselves and/or future students.

Student voices can act as a powerful catalyst to empower young people to become self-motivated, inquisitive, and continuous learners (Berv, 2002; Groves and Welsh 2010; SooHoo, 1995). Student voices, however, are unfortunately often overlooked in educational change initiatives, but listening attentively to those student voices may help educators, at all levels, better guide their students (Eisler, 2000; Mitra, 2009; Wasley, 1997).

**Missing in Action--Student Voices.** Since *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983, accountability remains the operative word. For the last twenty years, educators have initiated many programs to improve the educational process for all students. National and state officials have issued curriculum standards, created standardized tests, and spent significant resources of time and money to improve education for all students. The student voice, however, has been largely neglected in the quest to improve education (DeLaOssa, 2005; Farrell, 1994; Wasley, 1997; Yonezawa and Makeba 2009). As the most important single group in the education enterprise, it is curious that students are
rarely asked what they think about a process, a program, or a curriculum in which they are full participants (Fielding, 2001; Freeman, 2005; Groves and Welsh, 2010).

Students may have much to share with educators about their “college knowledge” needs (Carter & Robinson, 2002; Cushman, 2003; Shaw et al., 2009). The researcher hopes to facilitate students’ investment in their own preparation for college by conducting conversations through semi-structured interviews, conversing with students in a classroom setting, and ultimately respecting their voice (Johnson 1991).

The inclusion of the student voice may help clarify goals and objectives for teachers, counselors, administrators, and policy makers to revise college preparation programs for students from low SES backgrounds. The result of these student contributions could lead to more awareness among College Bound Program developers and sponsors about which “college knowledge” components prove most productive for these students. The resultant improvements could potentially increase the number of students from low SES backgrounds who attend four-year colleges (Bergerson, 2009; Tierney, 2004).


The partnership between Boston College and the Boston Public Schools began during the busing crisis of the 1970s and that partnership bore fruit with a formal program in 1987. Dr. George Ladd, a professor at Boston College, was the original
liaison to the Boston Public Schools and the founder of the College Bound Program (Heffernan, 2003; Ladd, 2010b).

The College Bound Program at Boston College is an academic enrichment and support program (College Bound Handbook, 2004). The ultimate goal of CB is for students to become familiar with the college environment and learn academic skills necessary for success in college. One measure of success of College Bound is based on students’ acceptances to four-year institutions with substantial financial assistance (College Bound Program, 2003). For more than twenty years, graduates of College Bound have been accepted at many four-year colleges, predominantly in the northeast section of the country. Since its beginning in 1987, more than 196 graduates of College Bound have earned a total of $24.7 million in financial support for higher education (College Bound Program. Welcome Packet, 2005-2006). Between 1998 and 2003, nearly all graduates of College Bound have gained admission to a four-year college (College Bound Handbook, 2004).

To be nominated and to remain in the College Bound Program, students must earn grades of B or above in their respective school and participate in school and community leadership endeavors (College Bound Handbook, 2004). All students attend the program on alternative Saturdays for three years. Students’ attendance record at their high school and at the College Bound Program on Saturdays is closely monitored by College Bound staff.

Students from two Boston public high schools participate in College Bound. Each year at the end of their freshman year, promising students from the West Roxbury Education Complex and Brighton High School are selected to attend the College Bound
Program at Boston College at the beginning of their sophomore year. According to the data on the Massachusetts DESE website, approximately 75% of the students at West Roxbury and more than 78% of the students at Brighton High are on free or reduced lunch (http://profiles.doe.mass.edu). Referring to the chart on page 6, fewer than 35% of students from either school should go on to four year colleges. The fact that nearly all participating College Bound students qualify for entrance to a four year college is one indication of its success.

Each Saturday that it convenes, the Program schedules six hours of activity for all participating students. From nine in the morning until three in the afternoon, students may find themselves scheduled for SAT preparation classes in math and English, college visits, art or science classes, library and computer lab sessions, community meeting time, museum trips, and lunch with a Boston College undergraduate student. The one hour lunch meeting with current Boston College students who act as “mentors” gives students the social opportunity to ask questions about college life. (Please refer to sample Saturday schedules in Appendix D).

Other activities that students attend while participating in the College Bound Program include sporting events, dance performances, and campus activities that may be ongoing when College Bound students are present. Students are also given privileges to utilize the athletic facilities and the library when they are at Boston College on Saturdays. Sensitive to the lower budgets of secondary school students, Boston College Dining Services graciously contributes a stipend, in the form of an electronic swipe card, on Saturdays to each participating student to subsidize the cost of lunch at the Boston College campus.
The wide range of activities, people, and programs designed by College Bound administrators was intended to reach different students in different ways. According to Professor Ladd, the intent of multiple programmatic elements put in place from the early years of College Bound Program was a conscious design to increase the chances that all students who attended would find something of interest to keep them coming back (Ladd, 2010a).

Even though College Bound has been successful, all programs go through cycles and require review and a periodic need for renewal, lest they find themselves complacent. As one of the teachers/tutors in the College Bound Program for four years (2002-2006), the researcher observed and taught many student participants in the College Bound Program. The participating high school students always seemed eager and open to this pre-college experience, albeit on Saturdays, and I wanted to discover from their perspective what kept them coming to the Boston College campus every other Saturday. In my earlier years with the Program, I asked some students what they liked about coming to Boston College on Saturdays. I also asked what obstacles they faced by attending the College Bound Program.

During one memorable exchange with senior students during the spring of 2003, I recall students mentioned to me that the cost of lunch was very expensive at Boston College, and asked me if College Bound students could receive some sort of discount. After all, they reasoned, they forfeit a potential work day to attend College Bound on Saturday. Not only did these students express an important point, but I thought they might have other relevant comments and suggestions of which I was unaware. I considered other issues that students experience differently than staff and administrators.
at College Bound. While I was initially interested in the College Bound Program as a source of specific information about attending college, it occurred to me that participating students may have a lot to say about their experiences. As a result of these exchanges with students and many discussions with my adviser, the focus of the research was to inquire of students 1) what students say they are learning at College Bound, and 2) what suggestions students have for improving the College Bound Program in the future. These two questions became the essential questions of this research.

I believe that student voices can contribute much to improve the educational processes in which they are involved. According to Freeman “researchers and policy makers rarely include the ideas, perceptions, and suggestions of individuals who are the focus of their studies” (Freeman 2005 p. 99). In my observations of these students over a four-year period, I felt that they had much to contribute to the improvement of the College Bound Program. In my role as a teacher and participant/observer in the CB Program, I heard from students directly and listened as they discussed issues and experiences among themselves. I also observed students in classes I did not teach, during their lunch periods with BC undergraduate mentors, and participated as a chaperone on various CB sponsored field trips. As a result of my direct experiences and observations, I wanted to ensure that the participating student voice became a major source of data in this study. As a noted French sociologist has written, “If given a chance to talk freely, people appear to know a lot about what is going on” (Bertaux 1981 p. 38). Such is the case with the participating students in the College Bound Program.

In more recent years College Bound has focused part of its curriculum on student action research on issues of critical importance in their schools—dropout rates, violence
prevention, and creating a more positive teen culture with their peers. According to the current College Bound coordinator, Catherine Wong, “students remain actively engaged in their learning, develop critical leadership skills, and envision college as a viable pathway to advancing their career interests” (http://www.bc.edu/office/pubaf/journalist/CollegeBound.html).

III. Purpose of the Study

The College Bound Program at Boston College recognizes the importance of college attendance and is structured to help students gain admission to a four-year college. Students who attend College Bound acknowledge the benefits of traveling to Boston College on alternate Saturdays for three years. By listening attentively to these participating students, the researcher may observe common themes such that successful programmatic components in College Bound can be enhanced for future students in the Program. Likewise, students may be able to offer suggestions to College Bound staff members about how to improve current program offerings.

The essential research questions in this study are:

1. What do students tell us they are learning about the college “pathway” at the College Bound program at Boston College?

2. What recommendations or suggestions do students offer to enhance or improve the College Bound program for themselves and/or future students?
IV. Theoretical Rationale

In general, students develop educational aspirations from both family members and their school culture. Peers and school personnel also contribute greatly to student educational goals (Yamamura et al., 2010). In fact, students from all SES backgrounds have educational objectives influenced by school personnel, whether attending a private or public school (Falsey & Heyns, 1984; Freeman, 2005; Liou et al., 2009). Due to public school funding formulas that continually under-fund schools in low SES districts, students from those districts are inevitably exposed to fewer educational opportunities (Books, 2004; Bowen, 2005; Kopkowski, 2005). Mitchell & Salsbury (2002) in a recent study have stated “no other western nation has neglected its low-income youth more than the U.S. has. (p. 118).” They continue with a relevant quote from Dewey’s *School and Society* (1915), written early in the twentieth century that speaks to higher expectations for all children in our society today.

*What the best and wisest parent wants for his own children, that must the community want for its children. Any other idea for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy* (Dewey, 1915, p.7).

Other writers, updating Dewey, have argued that post-secondary education is a pre-requisite for an effective labor force in the future (Carnevale, 2001; Deil-Amen & Tevis, 2010; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). In the same way that past generations have considered a secondary school diploma necessary for economic viability, the present and future economic and social structures demand some form of post-secondary education. Following this rationale, a new social contract would recommend universal access to
what amounts to a social good for the benefit of all (Reed, 2001). In the same way that a high school degree became a standard minimal level of education for employment in the twentieth century, a college diploma could become a social expectation in the 21st century.

Furthermore, we might consider that educational dreams cut across all lines of race, gender, age, and locale (Freeman, 2005; Liou et al., 2009). Universal access to higher education could unite all sectors of the nation. Upper middle class parents are not the only ones who desire improved prospects for their children’s employment. Nor are they unique in wanting to provide opportunities for intellectual curiosity and self-fulfillment (Freeman, 2005). All parents, not only the “best and wisest”, want education for their offspring for both utilitarian and non-utilitarian reasons. It is a condescending caricature that working people, recent immigrants, and poor people do not have similar hopes for their children (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Reed, 2001).

If we wish to minimize social inequality in the United States, one avenue is to increase college attendance and completion rates. Increased years of formal schooling beyond secondary school contribute towards many healthy outcomes for adults and the society at large. Socially, the positive link between college attendance and success in adulthood is well established (Bowen, 2005; Kezar, 1997; Knox et al., 1993; Solmon & Taubman, 1973). The determinants of college enrollment and college entry are critical to theoretical explanations of, and policies concerning, social inequality and stratification (Falsey, 1984; Yun & Moreno, 2006). Unfortunately, many students from low SES are ill-equipped financially and socially to apply to and succeed in college (Adam, 2003; Carter & Robinson, 2002; Luna De La Rosa, 2006; Savitz-Romer, 2004).
While student abilities and goals are strongly related to educational attainment, so too is family background. One of the missing pieces of educational reform over the last ten years has been the lack of focus on the most important single variable of educational outcomes—the socioeconomic status of families (Levin, 2000; Yamamura, 2010). Students from low SES backgrounds are not provided with the same material resources as students from middle or high SES backgrounds (Bowen, 2005; Orfield, 1992; Shaw et al., 2009). Students obtain some of these resources from a family’s cultural and social capital—the nexus of money, connections, and obligations that permeate wealthier families and well-financed school districts (Gerson, 1997; Luna De La Rosa, 2006). By definition, students from families with a low SES background do not have as much social capital as their wealthier peers, and this fact prevents them from enrolling in college as frequently as those students with more resources (City College of San Francisco, 2002; Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Rolfe, 1996). Yet, enrollment in college remains an important decision for high school seniors and a critical threshold for predicting future attainments and outcomes (Liou et al., 2009; Falsey, 1984).

Recognizing its responsibility to provide increased access to higher education, the federal government has facilitated the college access route for many students from low SES backgrounds (Walton, 2009). As part of President Lyndon Baines Johnson’s (LBJ) Great Society Program in the mid-1960s, Congress created the Higher Education Act of 1965, whereby financial barriers were supposed to be overcome for all American young people. As part of Johnson’s Great Society Program, Congress introduced many social programs designed to help students in less fortunate economic circumstances. The
Federal Government initiated Upward Bound at this time to assist low-SES students in gaining a foothold on the college path (McElroy & Armesto, 1998). The goal of Upward Bound was, and continues to be, to increase the rates at which participants enroll in and graduate from institutions of postsecondary education (Upward Bound Program, 2005).

During the 1990s the Clinton administration initiated Gain Early Acceptance and Readiness for Undergraduate Preparation (GEAR-UP), in which middle and high school students are assisted towards the college path as a realistic goal. GEAR-UP provides six-year grants to states and partnerships to provide college preparation services at high-poverty middle and high schools. Institutional grantees serve an entire cohort of students beginning no later than seventh grade and follow that cohort through high school (Ward, 2006). GEAR-UP works in partnership with states, colleges and universities, and school districts during the academic year (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness, 2006). Upward Bound and GEAR-UP are part of the federal government’s TRIO Programs that help low-SES students prepare for college. As useful as these programs can be, it is a sad commentary that TRIO programs reach fewer than ten percent of students eligible for their services (What is TRIO?, 2005). In other words, federally-funded college preparation programs are seriously under-funded and this pronounced lack of funding perpetuates the college admissions gap for students from low SES backgrounds.

Some school districts have incorporated many of the academic components similar to those of the College Bound program into their regular school curriculum. One such program, Advancement via Individual Determination, or AVID program, began in San Diego in the early 1980s and has grown rapidly in the last ten years. The AVID Program is currently utilized by more than 1,000 schools in the United States.
In the Austin (Texas) School District, students from grade 7 to grade 12 are placed in a college preparatory academic program in the daily AVID class, (Oswald, 2002).

Mehan suggests that AVID teachers create the support structures needed for historically disadvantaged students to succeed in their climb out of poverty towards college success and beyond. The social scaffolding that is integral to the AVID program lets students know that they have local support, a caring cohort of mentors, and a goal worth striving towards (Mehan et al., 1996).

Research indicates that students from low SES backgrounds who are counseled more frequently by school advisers and classroom teachers about completing the necessary steps to prepare for college are more likely to follow through with the application process to college (Falsey, 1984; Freeman, 2005; Luna De La Rosa, 2006; McDonough, 1997). A faculty that demonstrates high expectations for all students helps raise the bar of expectations for students and their families. Students, who might otherwise think college is beyond their reach, will respond to the encouragement of teachers and counselors at the school (King, 1996; Liou et al., 2009). In fact, school personnel play a very important role for low SES students trying to manage the college application process (Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Freeman, 2005; Savitz-Romer, 2004).

**Social Capital and College Attendance.** Coleman (1988) found that social capital includes information sharing channels and networks, as well as social norms, values and expected behaviors. Bourdieu conceives social capital as a set of durable, deliberate, institutionalized relationships and the benefits that accrue to individuals as a result of the
existence of social bonds (Bourdieu, 2001). Social capital may also be acquired within the family and/or outside the family through interactions with peers and school personnel (Perna, 2002; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). Lacking this social capital for higher education is one of the major deficiencies of students from low-income households (Freeman, 2005; Orfield, 1992; Shaw et al., 2009).

Some form of social capital is crucial in the preparation for, and application to college, whether it originates with members of the immediate or extended family, community resources, school personnel, peers, or college staff members. For families from high SES backgrounds, much educational social capital can be created within and beyond the household, but for families from low SES backgrounds, help is often required from outside the home in the form of school or community resources (Coleman, 1988; Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Hossler et al., 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). For many students from low SES backgrounds who attend college preparation programs, the educational social capital gained from the program may make the difference between attending college or not (Bergerson, 2009; Gandara, 2001; Loza, 2003).

Many students from low SES households do not enjoy sufficient financial, social and/or human capital in their lives to make an informed decision about attending college. Neither these students nor their families can afford private college counselors, private professional preparation courses for the SAT or ACT Test, or other amenities available to families with more financial resources. Parents from low SES backgrounds and many of their peers may not know of anyone who has successfully graduated from a four-year college (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Orfield, 1992).
What could schools do to contribute to the accumulation of social capital for students from lower SES backgrounds? Some research indicates that schools might provide current, robust, and accurate college knowledge for all students at the secondary level (Freeman, 2005; Ortiz & Gonzalez, 2000; Savitz-Romer, 2004; Shaw et al., 2009). In fact, because many high schools do not provide sufficient college knowledge to low SES students, many college preparation programs, such as College Bound at Boston College, attempt to address the college knowledge gap that exists between students from low and high SES backgrounds (Edens & Gilsinan, 2005; O’Brien & Shedd, 2001).

In the previously mentioned AVID program, teachers, college students, and a cohort peer group appear to be successfully creating this social capital that is lacking in the lives of students from low SES backgrounds (Mehan et al., 1996). One area of inquiry to be explored in this study is whether or not attending the College Bound Program empowers students to build self-confidence and acquire the grounded information to approach the college application process with less trepidation and much richer knowledge. This study intends to discover if, in fact, College Bound contributes social capital to those students who attend the Program (Cabrera, 2006).

V. Significance of the Study

The study intends to learn from students which elements of the College Bound Program are most helpful in the college knowledge process. This researcher also hopes to instill a desire in students to become more pro-active in their own educational careers by listening to their voices, opinions, and suggestions (Fielding, 2001; Groves and Welsh, 2010; Johnson, 1991). By documenting the significant ideas mentioned by students
about College Bound, this researcher hopes to provide valid information for Boston College administrators for the purposes of programmatic changes and future funding. This data could lead to the design of better programs and/or more students attending the College Bound Program at Boston College.

Interpreting and summarizing student responses may also assist present and future CB teachers and student mentors at Boston College to improve their efforts on behalf of the CB students. By listening to participants’ voices regarding what students deem useful and necessary to improve their chances for going to college, more school officials and policy makers will have an improved sense of what constitutes an effective college preparation program for students from low SES backgrounds. Furthermore, the research may contribute ideas to other partnerships between universities and public school districts in order to enhance the college knowledge process for students enrolled in university-sponsored college preparation programs (Borthwick et al., 1999; Edens & Gilsinan, 2005).

VI. Design of Research

The design of this research is a qualitative case study. Case studies are useful in that they provide a vivid description of a phenomenon by re-creating contexts, meanings, and intentions. Case studies also provide explanations, not merely about how the phenomenon exists, but why it exists (Charles & Mertler, 2002). In this study, the researcher expects student voices to contribute a more vivid description of College Bound and those aspects of the Program that are most important to participating students.
Data was generated using multiple methods. A paper and pencil survey of nearly half (29 of 60) of the participating students in the College Bound Program was conducted during the spring of 2007. The survey included multiple choice and open-ended responses. Other methods of data collection included semi-structured interviews, focus groups, College Bound documents, field notes and direct observation by the researcher.

Interviews were used to gather data because they are a purposeful conversation directed by one person to get information from another (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Twelve current students were interviewed. Eleven of those interviewed were seniors or juniors, students who have been in the program for two years or more. All interviewees became a member of one of three focus groups. Focus groups are group interviews that are structured and have a particular purpose (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998).

Surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups all interacted to provide triangulation for the data collected. Triangulation is necessary to ensure that the information has credibility (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Each data source has its own inherent strengths and weaknesses, and triangulation helps to balance one source against another to increase reliability of the information (Miles and Huberman, 1994). A copy of the survey questions, as well as questions for the interviews and focus groups are included in Appendix A.

As a part-time teacher and sometime participant/observer in the College Bound Program on Saturdays, this researcher collected data during most Saturdays when the College Bound Program met. Advantages for a participant/observer can result from developing a more informal and intimate relationship with the population observed. This
relationship may, in turn, lead to more thoughtful student responses to questions (Cohen, et al., 2000).

Another important source of data utilized were the documents generated by the College Bound Program itself. Yearbooks, facebooks, statistical reports, schedules, and program descriptions comprise the internal documents generated for program record-keeping and external publication. By analyzing these documents it helped to clarify what the College Bound Program values for its students, Boston College sponsors, participating public schools, and external supporters (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998).

The research protocols at both Boston College and the Boston Public Schools were followed. All interviews were audio-taped, coded, analyzed and interpreted by the researcher. Tapes were transcribed professionally. Individual student names were not used, and the tapes are maintained in a secure place at the researcher’s home office.

VII. Limitations

The study may be limited due to the role of the researcher as participant/observer. Research conducted by a participant/observer has potential strengths and weaknesses (Merriam, 2001). This situation has been described as a potential strength in the Research Design section above, but the potential weaknesses must also be addressed. One weakness that may manifest itself is possible researcher bias toward the students and the College Bound Program. The other weakness is bias toward the researcher by students who may not want to “tell it like it is” to a perceived representative of the College Bound Program.

This potential weakness was mitigated by sharing with students the transparent goal of the study, which was to improve the Program for future students. I underscored
This idea in an invitational letter and when speaking with students. I assured students that the College Bound Program intends to improve itself, and that whatever students say will not be taken personally. It was emphasized that student comments would be anonymously recorded, and that no student would be affected by what he/she states on a survey, in an individual interview, or as part of a focus group.

A second limitation may be the limited generalization of this study to similar programs, whether at Boston College or other colleges or universities. As many qualitative studies are limited to a specific place and time, one expects a future reader to grasp the essential transparency of the phenomenon in order to apply its ideas to a similar program (Krathwohl, 1998; Lancy, 1993). The rich description that emerged from students’ voices in the College Bound Program may be able to compensate for this limitation.

A statistical limitation could have existed if one high school or the other had a majority of participants represented in the College Bound Program. The goal was to have a purposeful sample with equal representation from both high schools. The normal College Bound participation rate is approximately 50 percent from each of the two high schools, and this researcher maintained that ratio in the data collection process.
VIII. Definition of Terms

1. Low SES students—families whose household income places them in the lowest income quintile (the lowest 20% of the population—those earning under $23,000 annually). (United States. Department of Commerce, 2010).

2. High SES students—families whose household income places them in the highest income quintile (the highest 20% of the population—those earning over $100,000 annually). (United States. Department of Commerce, 2010).

3. Attending college—attending a four-year college as opposed to a two-year community college or a technical school. A four-year college is a baccalaureate granting institution. Two-year colleges tend to be non-selective, and frequently allow open admissions to all students who apply with a high school diploma.

4. College knowledge—including knowledge of appropriate high school courses required for application to four-year colleges, as well as knowledge about the preparation of the college application and the financial aid process.

IX. Overview of the Study

This research study contains five chapters. Chapter One includes the introduction, the statement of the problem, key research questions, theoretical rationale, and a brief description of the design. Chapter Two investigates the relevant literature that has guided the research on the definition of student voice, the subject of student voice and its cultivation in a democracy, the student voice in schools, the history and purpose of college preparatory programs, and student voice (or lack thereof) in college preparation
programs. Chapter Three describes the research design in detail, including justification for particular methods of data generation and analysis. Chapter Four presents the analysis and interpretation from the data sources. The concluding chapter discusses the results of the findings in relation to the theoretical rationale described in Chapter One. Chapter Five also will make recommendations for policy, practice, and areas for future research.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction. Chapter One established that higher education is increasingly essential for individuals to participate in the advanced economies of the future. Research also concludes that attending college adds value to life, enhances self-esteem, increases engagement in the community and contributes to the understanding of others. College graduates tend to live longer and healthier lives and are more likely to continue learning over their lifetime (Conley, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Given that the college experience contributes to a person’s intellectual and moral growth, as well as increased psychosocial skills, educators may want to ensure that all students are prepared to attend college, whether they decide to enroll or not (Barth, 2003; Ready to Succeed, 2006).

This study intends to document what the participating students say they are learning in the College Bound Program at Boston College, and this chapter will focus on the multiple facets of the student voice. The emic perspective tries to communicate, as much as possible, the participant’s view to readers on the outside (Krathwohl, 1998). By including the emic, or insider’s point of view, the researcher will describe in detail what lessons the students have absorbed by attending the College Bound Program (Merriam, 2001).

These “multiple perspectives” that different participating students bring to the College Bound Program may help readers balance the etic, or outsiders’ point of view (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The researcher intends to blend the emic and etic perspectives for a more holistic account of College Bound. Regardless of how well
planned the College Bound organizers feel the Program to be, the student participants may offer suggestions that can lead to improvement for all involved in the Program (Cook-Sather, 2009; DeLaOssa, 2005). By inviting and analyzing student voices to say what they are learning from the College Bound Program at Boston College, the researcher hopes to demonstrate the importance and necessity of including student input to improve their own educational programs.

This chapter will review the literature that explores the evolving concept of the student voice and why those voices should be utilized more pro-actively by educators. The first section begins with a definition of student voice which is followed by an analysis of why student voices go unheard. The significance of student voice is then charted by tracing the historical ideas of four democratic progressive educators, all of whom acknowledge the advantages of student input for the benefit of the individual student, as well as the broader benefits to democratic society. Because educators should play a major role in teaching students how to utilize their voices, the chapter then describes how educators might encourage students to utilize their voices throughout their entire educational experience.

The literature review then broadens the framework of student voice by describing its potential positive role at both the personal and school levels—how students personalize their school experiences and how their voices might help the educational reform movement (Cook-Sather, 2009). Due to the paucity of literature that analyzes student voice in college preparation programs (Tierney, 2004), I intend to explore the broader view of student voice in schools to investigate how the student voice might be
used more productively in college preparation programs. Because college preparation programs are often connected to high schools, and the elements in those programs are aimed at high school students, exploring the literature of student voice in high schools has much relevance to that same voice in college preparation programs. The final sections describe the history and purposes of college preparation programs, and the somewhat muted role of student voice in college preparation programs.

**Student Voice Defined.** Student voice originates from the unique perspective of young people in schools. It is formed in a similar way that adult voice is formed—by the experience and education that help students create opinions, ideas, and beliefs (Fletcher, 2002). Student voices are the “words, narratives, discourses and stories that help express the dynamics of social experience and help shape and position the subjective understanding of this experience …” (Walsh, 1991). For the purposes of this study, the guiding definition of student voice is “the actual words and opinions expressed by students in a thoughtful and constructive manner” (Fletcher, 2002).

Although educators at all levels may have initial reservations about listening to the student voice, in fact, teachers should play an important role in its constructive development (McQuillan 1995, 1997, 2005). Nieto (1994) emphasizes that focusing on student voice is not meant to suggest that students have the final or conclusive word on how education might change for the better.

**Student Voice—Unheard and Untapped.** Educators do not often ask students what they think about their problems in school (Fullan, 1991; Mitra, 2009). Most teachers rarely provide, or have, sufficient time to talk to students about their own learning.
(Cushman, 2003). Many teachers, under time constraints to cover a closely watched
district-regulated curriculum, overlook the fact that students should be taught how to
advocate for themselves, and how to give important feedback for their own growth and
development (Apple & Beane, 1995; Mitra, 2009; Rodgers, 2002). It is ironic that those
who spend the most time in classrooms, not only are given little time to talk (Nieto 1994),
but also are often considered “nonentities” (Muncey & McQuillan, 1991). Educators
who ignore the contribution of student voice may lack one important source of data to
improve a given program (Yonezawa and Jones, 2009).

Recent research indicates that organizations of the future will take full advantage
of distributed intelligence at all levels (Fielding, 2001; Pearson & Voke, 2003).
Distributed intelligence, a term which originated by describing computers being linked
together for greater power, can also be applied to individuals in learning organizations
(Hoerr, 2003). Some research suggests that intelligence may, in fact, reside more in
social interactions between people than it does as a cognitive trait in individuals (Resnick
& Nelson-LeGall, 1997; Vygotsky, 1962; Woolley et al., 2010).

For overloaded teachers, this may come as good news (Johnson, 1991).
Educators might expect to distribute the responsibility for education across many
shoulders, including those of students (Hoerr, 2003). Activating and guiding student
voice are two means of distributing this ever-increasing burden. By making time
available to listen to students’ ideas, educators can facilitate the process whereby students
act as responsible agents of change and not merely its passive end products (Cook-Sather,
2009; Kushman, 1997; Noguera, 2004).
Senge (2000) believes that one of the most important skills in post-industrial society will be an increased ability to think in concert with others. Utilizing student voices for improving education may be one encouraging method to harness this social intelligence. Hoerr (2003) contends that teaching and modeling how to exercise one’s responsible voice could become part of the school’s curriculum. When faculty members take the time and work with students to practice how to constructively use empowerment, students learn to trust themselves and their teachers more (Cook-Sather, 2006, 2009; McQuillan, 2005).

One collaborative program did listen to students in the Chicago metropolitan area where external university researchers were contracted to help diagnose some of the needs for the Chicago Public Schools. As a result of this study, Borthwick et al. (1999) reported students should be more involved in change processes and their needs, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors must find an organized way to become an integral part of the problem solving process.

Educators may significantly improve their own practice, if they take the time to listen to the diverse sets of student voices (Kushman, 1997; Lee, 1999). Too often students view their education as a series of disconnected subjects, teachers, and events. Students from low SES backgrounds, in particular, see their school as a place and not a process, an end in itself rather than a means toward a better future (Swail, 2000). Because student voices inevitably differ within any school setting, it behooves educators to listen to “the squeaky wheels and the flat tires,” those visible and vocal students, as well as the invisible and silent ones (Redekopp & Bourbonniere, 2009; Silva, 2001).
Many students, especially those in low SES schools, do not get a chance to experience a vibrant democracy in schools (Farrell, 1994). Kozol (2005) found that many American schools are segregated de-facto, which prevents many children in minority communities from visualizing a larger democratic community. This segregation leads, not only to geographic isolation from the mainstream culture, but also to a more “scripted” curriculum where ‘the poorer the student, the more scripted the curriculum” (Kozol, 2005, p. 98). As a result, student voice is even less audible in schools where many students come from low SES backgrounds (Farrell, 1994; Vyverman and Vettenburg, 2009).

Kozol calls for a national movement to remedy the condition of urban districts where a majority of the population consists of children from poor minority communities. Listening actively to students’ voices may create opportunities for students to see and feel what democracy should look like. As he talked to these students during school and community visits, Kozol reminds us that students “are a great deal more reliable in telling us what actually goes on in a public school . . . and in the big things children rarely have much reason to mislead us” (Kozol, 2005, p.12).

Listening to students describe their learning styles, their personal experiences of school, their future goals and past difficulties, could contribute to the design of a potential solution to the educational disparity manifested by the achievement gap (Fielding, 2004; Bempechat, 1999). Because the achievement gap eventually results in a “college readiness” gap (Yun & Moreno, 2006), educators could help all students better prepare for college by listening to their concerns about teaching and their learning (Cook-Sather, 2009; Innes et al., 2001; McKibben, 2004). If educators utilize all student voices as part
of the data input when considering educational change, many of the current intractable problems in education may become easier to address (Galguera, 2005; Yonezawa and Jones, 2009).

**The Educational Significance of Student Voice.** That the learning process is a partnership between student and teacher has long been part of the progressive ideal in education (Cook-Sather, 2006; Meier, 2000; Walch, 1952). For more than two centuries leading progressive educators have advocated for less authoritarianism in the educational process (Eisler, 2000). As democracy has expanded in that time, education has become a basic right, guaranteed and supported by all modern democratic governments.

Four representative progressive educators who span two centuries—Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and Paolo Freire—all believed that education is a two way process, as much for the student as the teacher.

Pestalozzi (1746-1827), a Swiss educator, wrote at the start of the modern movement for political democracy, during the time of the American and French revolutions. Before Pestalozzi, schoolmasters observed only the external life, rather than the inner life, the superficial rather than the essential, and the immediate requirements of daily life rather than thoughts and aspirations of the student (Green, 1969). Furthermore, Pestalozzi believed that children should develop their inner powers, and that these powers were dynamic, not static. Cook-Sather (2009) refers to these inner powers as potentially transformative for the individual. According to Pestalozzi, intellectual capacity could and should be developed in all children (Green, 1969; Walch, 1952).
John Dewey (1859-1952) believed in the historical evolution of society where important factors such as the development of technology, improved education, and the rise of democracy, have tended to shrink the distance between people and (social) classes previously isolated from each other. Consequently, to learn how to get along is a primary task for education (Dewey, 1916). Dewey (1938) wrote that education is the “freeing of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed to social aims” (p. 115). The curriculum of the school would integrate the external world with the world of individualized learning (Dewey, 1915).

Maria Montessori (1870-1952) demonstrated that pupils are naturally equipped in their whole being for the adventure of life, accustomed to the free exercise of will and judgment, illuminated by imagination and enthusiasm. Montessori felt that only such pupils will be able to exercise rightly the duties of citizens in a civilized commonwealth (Montessori, 1961). In the long run, the goal of education is to be able to take care of oneself and the environment. In Montessori’s world, learning is a transactional process that affirms collaboration and community. Montessori believed strongly that participants teach and learn from one another (Lillard, 1972; Loeffler, 1992).

Paolo Freire (1921-1997) wrote that true education would not mold people to fit static roles expected of them in society, but could prepare them to realize their own values and reality. Although Freire worked primarily with adults, he believed that the role of education was to teach people to reflect and critically study the world around them, and ultimately move into action to transform that world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). In fact, it is our awareness of being “unfinished” that makes us educable throughout our lives (Freire, 1998). Freire’s followers have cultivated the notion that critical pedagogy
involves political dialog between teachers and students as an important part of the educator’s role in schools (Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 1993). As a necessary part of the dialog, the student voice is a central component of critical pedagogy espoused by Freire and his followers (Rossatto, 2005).

All four of these educators—Pestalozzi, Dewey, Montessori, and Freire—believed education is a dynamic and transactional process, involving all participants cooperatively in the learning process. Student voices are a vital component in that process, and student input is crucial for their own development. Student voices are not to be treated as a convenient “add-on,” included in the process only if time permits, but should be an integral part of the school culture (Fishman & McCarthy, 2005; McQuillan, 2005). Student voices are also important to the continued development of their teachers, the school’s culture, and the wider society (Cook-Sather, 2009).

More recent research concludes that students could benefit in four different dimensions—organizational, personal, pedagogical, and political—by having their voice heard and respected by the school community (Rudduck & Demetriou, 2003). Students could be recognized as active members of the school community by adults and other members of the community. This organizational dimension makes the school community a wider circle where more voices are included. Second, students could develop more self-respect and self-worth. This personal dimension builds student confidence for present and future endeavors. Its effect is cumulative for the developing student. Third, students learn about themselves when asked to contribute in some meaningful way. This pedagogic dimension remains with the student for activities both in and out of school. Fourth, students learn that they have a role as an active agent for change, and not as a
mere passive consumer of change that someone else has advanced. Students have a huge potential contribution to make as active players in the educational system. The political dimension serves to instill in students that the democratic process is dynamic and subject to change according to the active participants in the process (Rudduck & Demetriou, 2003).

The educational significance of student voice also leads to the nurturing of the developmental needs of youth. Agency, Belonging, and Competence, three concepts that help to understand youth experience in student voice, are sometimes referred to as the ABC’s of youth development. All three concepts are enhanced when educators bring students into the educational change arena and truly seek out meaningful input from them (Mitra, 2004).

Agency refers to the acting or exerting influence and power in a given situation. Agency offers the belief that people can change themselves and their institution (Cook-Sather, 2006, 2009; Mitra 2004). The student’s “locus of control” shifts from being exclusively external to internal and external (Ezell & Klein, 2003).

Belonging is the feeling that students have a role at the school, where students develop meaningful relationships with adults and peers (Mitra, 2004). School “connectedness” is key to successful student experience, and it is this perceived lack of connectedness to schools that has prompted many larger schools to convert to small learning communities (Blum & Libbey, 2004). This topic, belonging or school connectedness, will be explored in more detail later in the chapter.

Competence fosters new abilities and gives students a feeling of being appreciated for one’s talents. The idea of competence also improves problem-solving skills,
facilitates interaction with authority, and enhances a student’s ability to respect the opinions of others (Mitra, 2004).

It is not surprising that these concepts—agency, belonging, and competence—exist in high quality co-curricular programs, whether athletic, artistic, or community service in nature. Student athletes, artists, or community volunteers want to feel that they belong to a community where their efforts are recognized and appreciated, and where they learn new skills and competencies in the process (Farrell, 1994). It is the goal of educational change agents to bring those youth development skills into the learning process itself, by teaching and modeling how schools and affiliated programs can benefit by the inclusion of the student voice (Brooker & Macdonald, 1999; Kordalewski, 1999; Mitra, 2009).

**Student Voice in a Democracy.** Some educators believe that the primary goal of schools is to prepare students to become economically productive citizens of our democracy (Glickman, 1993). While this economic outcome may be desirable, it limits the schools to a purely utilitarian role. Barber reminds us “Public schools are not merely schools for the public, but schools of publicness” (Barber, 1997, p. 22). It is at school that students begin to learn what it means to be a public citizen. Inasmuch as student voices are silent on many issues directly related to students’ educational lives, public schools are undemocratic and neglectful of their role as an important component in the making of responsible citizens (Apple & Beane, 1995; Galguera, 2005).

For the past century, leading American educators have written that teaching about democracy in schools is not sufficient, if the practice of democracy does not exist in those
Maxine Greene reminds educators: “surely it is an obligation of education in a democracy to empower the young to become members of the public, to participate, and play articulate roles in the public space” (Greene 1985, p. 7).

Throughout the twentieth century, educators such as John Dewey (1915) and Darling-Hammond (1996), inform us that the frequent practice of democracy helps students understand their rights and responsibilities more completely. Educators contribute to this process by creating structures for caring, structures for serious learning, and structures that support teacher collaboration and continuous learning (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Apple & Beane (1995) believe “if society wants its young people to secure and maintain a democratic way of life, they must have adequate opportunities to learn what that way of life means and how it might be led” (p. 7). Student input through the expression of their voice is one way to ensure this opportunity.

A major role of public education, often overlooked, is the creation of a widely informed democratic public (Creating Laboratories of Democracy, 2002; Postman, 1995). That role may remind educators to frame their lessons, units, and curriculum with an eye towards creating more democratically savvy students. If their voices are truly listened to and respected, students could become co-creators of their own educational environment as well as involved and practicing democrats (Every Student a Citizen, 2000; Levin, 2000; Mitra, 2009).

The socialization that occurs in schools should help prepare students for their future role as active democratic citizens (Apple & Beane, 1995; Goodlad, 1997b). At the very least, student voices should broaden the conversations adults tend to have with one another (Yonezawa and Jones, 2009). It is possible, however, that the myriad societal
burdens heaped onto schools has “crowded out” the curriculum strand of a democratically educated citizenry (Tse, 2000). In the final analysis, education is inextricably bound to democracy in American society, as both attempt to balance individual freedom with civic responsibility (Breaking Ranks, 1996; Dewey, 1938).

If we understand that instilling democratic habits of mind is part of the educational process in a democratic culture, then those skills, habits and aptitudes should be taught explicitly to young people in schools (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003; Meier, 2003). Educators not only help improve an individual’s current educational program, but also help develop tomorrow’s democratic citizens by listening attentively to the student voice (Every Student a Citizen, 2000; Goodlad, 1997; Mitra, 2009). In creating a democratic disposition, educators could recognize that students have a right to participate in decision-making processes, according to their level of maturity (White 1996).

The student voice, however, is frequently absent from many educational change initiatives (Corbett and Wilson, 1995; Groves and Welsh, 2010; Mitra, 2004; Rudduck, 1997). Students are rarely asked to plan changes, rarely consulted on the need for change, and often ignored in the process of change itself (McQuillan, 1997). Fullan reminds us that no one knows how students feel about particular processes in education, because no one ever asks (Fullan, 1991). As a result of student voices being overlooked and/or underdeveloped, students themselves are often not clear about their own responsibility for learning (Groves and Welsh, 2010).

We learn and become who we are through interaction with others (Mitra, 2004; Vygotsky, 1962). Educators sometimes forget that they co-create lessons with their students, and that the interpersonal exchange with students is an integral part of good
classroom practice (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1999). Educators in a democracy demonstrate concern for the learning process as much as the product. If educators maintain a passive, one-way delivery system of knowledge from teacher to student, our democracy may whither from lack of pro-active and direct experience in democratic processes (NAEP 1998 Civics National Report Card, 2000).

Developing the student voice, particularly in students who are unaccustomed to being heard, could help the school community renew itself (Cook-Sather, 2009; Cushman, 2005; Flutter, 2006). If educators ask students more poignant questions about their own education and invite them into the discussion of educational change, students may respond with perspectives and insights which announce a true learning community (Mitra, 2009; Noguera, 2004,). Educators could inject an enriched sense of democratic participation that will help the entire society improve itself from the bottom up (Nieto, 2005).

One positive outcome of allowing student voice a more prominent place in educational change initiatives is the empowering experience itself (McQuillan, 1995; Rudduck & Demetriou, 2003). As students become proficient in exercising their voices, they develop self-confidence in their abilities, a sense of belonging, and a feeling of competence that they can accomplish something concrete (Enos, 1999; Mitra, 2009). Adult respect for the student voice, properly cultivated and expressed, instructs students on how they might inhabit the democratic community. As the student practices using his voice in a democratic setting in school, the idea grows in him and with him toward the larger democratic community (Barber, 1997; Elkind, 2001).
The society in turn also gains from the development of students who learn to use their voices effectively. The democratic tradition is passed on, individuals develop an interest in the wider society, and active citizens become part of the democratic process (Every Student a Citizen, 2000; Rudduck & Demetriou, 2003).

The Educator’s Role in Developing Student Voice. In the hectic pace of the school year, educators often forget that “schools are forges of our citizenship, a bedrock of our democracy” (Barber 1998, p. 226). Empowering students to utilize their voices responsibly is not an easy task, and educators could play a pivotal role in helping students learn this skill (McQuillan, 2005). Just as they need instruction in history, biology, and algebra, young people also require help developing an appreciation for democratic institutions and a greater willingness to be involved in them (Apple & Beane, 1995; Every Student a Citizen, 2000).

Utilizing student voice encourages pupils to become more pro-active in their own education (Apple & Beane, 1995; Cook-Sather, 2006). If we consider schools as active learning communities, this notion implies that all stakeholders should have a role in schools (Groves and Welsh, 2010). The student voice is often implicit in the educational process, through writing, speaking, debating, experimenting, or presenting. According to Lisa Delpit (1995), educators “need to help students establish their own voices, and to coach those voices to produce notes that will be heard clearly in the larger society” (p. 46).

A vibrant democracy recognizes that all voices must have representation and that “democracy from below” has as much validity as democracy from the top (Levin, 2000;
More active school citizenship would require student voices to be sought out, tended, and invited to contribute to the improvement of the school culture (Galston, 2003; Payne, 2003; Yonezawa and Jones, 2009). It falls to educators to cultivate the least recognized presence in schools—the student voice—and listen to it attentively (Barber, 1998; Berv, 2002; McQuillan, 1995).

Brooker and Macdonald (1999) help us understand that making the case for “why” to use student voice is only half the picture. Educators must address the more difficult question of “how” to utilize student voices. Student voice informs the subject in ways other stakeholders cannot, particularly in the matter of cultural capital that students bring with them to school (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995; Vyverman and Vettenberg, 2009). Addressing these problems requires a sustained commitment to working through them and a willingness to listen and learn from others whose experiences may be different from our own (Cook-Sather, 2009; Pearson & Voke, 2003). Describing how difficult it is to utilize student voices well, McQuillan (2005) contrasted two high schools and their very different experiences in their approach to student empowerment. The point is not to romanticize or exaggerate the impact of those voices, but to utilize student voices as part of legitimate policy and practice (Cook-Sather, 2009; Hargreaves, 1996; Mitra, 2009). Recent research also underscores the fact that, in the post-modern world, student voice may encompass only the confident and articulate voices, leaving behind the powerless and shy (Taylor and Robinson, 2009).

Encouraging students to voice their opinions may give rise to matters that would go unnoticed by teachers themselves (Cook-Sather, 2009; Redekopp and Bourbonniere, 2009; Thornton & Chapman, 2000). Schools generally discount student knowledge and
experience to the detriment of both teacher and student (Darder, 2002). For example, when students state something that is patently false about college entrance requirements, teachers may discover just how little students actually know about college. Staff members in a college preparation program may not spend sufficient time talking with students about the range of programmatic elements that might be considered to improve the program. In addition to listening to students to enhance their teaching, teachers might encourage students in the development of their voices for their own growth as learners (Kordelewski, 1999).

McKibben (2004) believes that our schools and our world will become better places if we listen attentively to students. Educators could be trained in the process of including student voices, and reminded that they need not agree with all student ideas. When students feel they have a voice in their learning environment, they not only become contributing members in a democratic setting, but they also become more engaged in their own learning (Cushman, 2005; Smith, 2003). For example, researchers found middle school students responsive to the idea of periodic classroom meetings, a basic form of democratic dialog (Ackley, 2003). Students who were given an opportunity in a physical education program in Australia gave instructors real input for curriculum changes (Brooker & Macdonald, 1999). At other schools, students at all levels who participated in classroom meetings felt more empowered and experienced a greater sense of belonging (Landau & Gathercoal, 2000).

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1999) underscores the fact that dialog includes silence as well as talk, and teachers could demonstrate their respect if they listen more to students.
In this dialog with students, teachers may even find that the subject matter they are trying to teach becomes more accessible to students (Cook-Sather, 2002, Delpit 1988).

If educators give it a chance, student expression may in turn cause students to reflect on their own responsibility for learning and to better understand multiple perspectives (Ezell & Klein, 2003). The educator has an obligation to provide, in Dewey’s terms, whatever “capacity for sympathetic understanding” we have gained from our own experience to each teaching moment (Kaplan, 2000). By encouraging questions, initiative, introspection, and reflection, educators can cultivate potential democratic tendencies in their students (Smith, 2003). If we want to become good teachers, we have to listen to our students to understand them (Cook-Sather, 2006; Kaplan, 2000). It is important to recognize that it is precisely students’ questions, misperceptions, innate curiosity, and restlessness that are pedagogic signals for good teachers (Freire & Faundez, 1989; Rodgers, 2002).

Educators should understand that giving student voice a role to play does not turn over the direction of the school to the students (Mitra, 2009). Fielding (2004) cautions educators to find a proper balance between two polar opposite mistakes when it comes to utilizing student voice in schools. On the one hand, educators cannot afford to ignore or exclude student voices. On the other hand, educators cannot treat the expression of student voices as uncritically insightful and liberating (Fielding, 2004; Groves and Welsh, 2010). McQuillan (2005) observed that faculty and administrators have a critical role to play in ensuring that student voices are nurtured, acknowledged, and sustained over time. Student voices should be included, not to dictate change, but to widen and deepen the democratic dialog (Cook-Sather, 2009; Sarason, 1990).
Even sympathetic educators, however, are suspicious of giving too much voice to students in school. One reason is that educators do not trust students to reflect responsibly on issues in school (Cottle, 2001). A second reason is that teachers do not feel comfortable granting to students privileges that teachers themselves do not enjoy in the political environment that governs schools (McQuillan, 1995; Sarason, 1990; Taylor and Robinson, 2009). Recognizing the perceived, but often unexpressed, power relationships in schools and classrooms, McQuillan alerts educators that “any attempt to empower students in a school where faculty members feel they have little or no power seems destined to fail” (McQuillan, 2005).

Adults have difficulty sharing power with students, yet it is the responsibility of the adult to model the idea of power sharing, the quintessential characteristic of a living, democratic culture (Campbell et al., 1994). Recognizing that the art of listening to students is not easy, teachers may feel uncomfortable when they initiate a classroom discussion that draws heavily on student voices (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1999). At the same time, knowledgeable teachers recognize that actions and words are important in school, and used correctly, could set up a new dynamic for students. All learners have human potential derived from a developmental “code” that can be blunted or nurtured by a teacher’s words or actions (Sarason, 1995; Vygotsky, 1962). For educators reluctant to take the risk of encouraging students to practice using their voices, Sarason (1995) has these sage words to offer:

*Ideals are ideas about what should be . . . while at the same time we know and regret that we will fall short of the mark. It is one thing to aim and fall short of the mark; it is inexcusable if, knowing you will inevitably fall short of the mark, you do not even take aim (p. 145).*
Educators have the obligation to demonstrate how responsible voices can and do contribute to the community, and then to assist students to develop that responsible voice (McQuillan, 1995). Just as adults in a family have the primary responsibility to teach young people proper social and ethical conduct, schools and their affiliated educational programs could have the primary responsibility to teach appropriate democratic conduct to students (Campbell, 2006; Coles, 1997; Sarason, 1995).

**Expanding the Frame of Student Voice.** This section will review significant literature of the student voice across the educational experience. The underutilization of student voice in schools is part of a continuum that extends into college preparation programs. The student voice in college preparation programs then becomes one segment of this continuum of underutilized student voices. By integrating the literature of the student voice in college preparation programs with the student voice in schools the researcher hopes to highlight what educators may be missing—both in daily life in school and in supplemental college awareness programs.

It is essential to widen the lens of the literature review on student voice for many reasons. *First*, the student voice in college preparation programs is important both to the developing sense of the student who is continuing his/her education and to the teachers, mentors, and administrators who work in those programs to meet the needs of current and future participating students more effectively. A student unaccustomed to using his/her voice in school may not be able to understand and/or practice self-advocacy in a college preparation program either, particularly a program that meets outside of school hours in a different, less familiar location (Tierney, 2004).
By interviewing participating students and seeking their input about what they are learning at the College Bound Program, the researcher intends to contribute to that knowledge base for Boston College to help participating College Bound students in the future. In the process, one of the stated purposes of the College Bound Program “to seek to provide each student with the skills and motivation to reach their potential and use College Bound students as both role models and change agents in their school and communities” will be fulfilled (College Bound Student Handbook, 2002).

Second, many leading educators believe strongly that schools should play an important role in the civic education of its students (Dewey, 1916; Every Student a Citizen, 2000; Glickman, 1998). Maxine Greene reminds us that democracy is a community always in the making, always incomplete (Greene, 1993). Developing student voice is part of that civic education, even if the last few years have seen an abdication of that role in favor of an academic emphasis signaled by high stakes testing (Boston, 2005; Sehr, 1997).

For students to learn to navigate that wider world with increased confidence, they need to learn authentic communication in schools with teachers as guides and role models (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2002). Teachers in a democracy might be expected to instruct students in more than academic proficiency, for all students will inhabit a democratic “self” as they grow into adults and take their place as a member of an active participatory democracy (Apple & Beane, 1995; Greene, 1993).

Third, the social experience students receive at schools often outweighs the academic preparation educators are trying to instill (Blum & Libbey, 2004; Eckert, 1989). Encouraging students to express themselves intelligently in an educational program is a
task that educators could attempt as an integral component of classroom practice, regardless of the subject taught or the age of the student. As students seek further education in a college preparation program, the need to cultivate student voices is essential for students as well as the program (Cook-Sather, 2009). A more democratically created curriculum might include questions and concerns students have about how a college preparation program relates to participants and their world (Apple & Beane, 1995; Freire & Faundez, 1989).

Finally, emotional growth for secondary students is not a direct linear pathway, and students should learn how to harness and express their feelings in preparing for the world beyond high school. Learning how to become an advocate for oneself is vital to any developing individual, and the student continuing his/her education will have to become a more independent learner—one that uses an effective personal voice as part of self-advocacy (Mitra, 2004). For these four reasons, among others, it is essential to include the emic viewpoint in the research of college preparation programs (Gandara, 2001; Swail, 2000; Tierney, 2004).

**Student Voice and Personalization in School.** Much research indicates that school “connectedness” is a key variable for successful students and effective schools (Blum & Libbey, 2004; Klem & Connell, 2004; Mitra, 2009). Students whose voices and viewpoints are solicited and acted upon feel a closer connection to the school than those students who feel ignored by educators (Berv, 2002). The *Wingspread Declaration on School Connections* (2004) defined the school connection as the belief by students that adults in school care about their academic learning, as well as about them individually.
Adolescents feel more connected to school when their developmental needs are met (Blum & Libbey, 2004). These developmental needs include increased opportunities for independence and autonomy, opportunities to demonstrate competence, caring and support from adults, and acceptance from peers (McNeely et al., 2002).

Hoffman and Levak suggest that, in addition to academic challenge, schools could focus on five areas of personalization. Most of these areas would rely on allowing students to express themselves more directly. Those five areas recommend that all school staff members should: 1) know students better; 2) trust students more than they do; 3) empower students in authentic ways; 4) connect to students in meaningful ways; and, 5) honor students in varied systems of recognition and reward (Hoffman and Levak, 2003).

By encouraging students to voice their opinions of school from their accumulated social or academic experiences, and then listening attentively to those expressed concerns, adults and students could re-fashion school culture to the benefit of all members of the school community (Freed & Smith, 2004; Mitra, 2009; Yonezawa & Jones, 2009). For example, students in Hudson, Massachusetts, have an opportunity to formulate community service projects themselves and, as a result of their own input, students experience greater depth and commitment in their service to others in the community (Berman, 2003). Young people optimize learning when they take an active role in their learning, when they have meaningful opportunities for meaningful choice, and when they become contributors and change makers. Students need the experience of individual decision-making at school to foster personal moral growth as well as to experience hands-on practice in democratic government (Berman, 2003).
The recent evolution of student advisories highlights the fact that students require a caring, secure place that personally confirms them as potential learners in a community of learners. Advisories consist of small groups that encourage individual discussions between students and advisors, where student voice would occupy a central role. Some of the best personalization programs include peer, staff members, and/or community members acting as advisors to students (Breaking Ranks, 1996; Breaking Ranks II, 2004). Trusted adults—teachers, supervisors, and mentors—remain role models for most students, and students will continue to rely on educators and other adults to reinforce a belief in their ability to be successful learners (Howard, 2003). Those trusted adults should ensure that hearing, representing, and sponsoring student voices become an integral part of the school’s culture (Hargreaves, 1996; Mitra, 2009).

Putting an active student voice into practice could potentially change students from passive recipients to active collaborators in solving some of the school’s problems (Cook-Sather, 2009; Galguera, 2005; Mitra, 2004). Students might suggest improvements to the physical environment that can lead to improved learning outcomes (Flutter, 2006). Other research has demonstrated that exercising student voice helps build awareness that they can make changes in their schools, not only for themselves, but for others as well (Oldfather, 1995; Yonezawa & Jones, 2009).

Partnering with students, always with appropriate adult guidance, to identify educational problems and possible solutions, reminds educators that students possess unique knowledge and perspectives about their own learning that adults cannot replicate (Cook-Sather, 2009; Cushman, 2005; Mitra, 2004). By creatively exercising the unique perspective of the student voice, students can gain much needed self-confidence,
programs could be improved, and the entire learning community would benefit (Barber, 1998; Mitra, 2004, 2009).

Many students can, and often do, provide perspectives that are unique and insightful (Kushman, 1997; Mitra, 2009). If educators ask for input from students before teaching part of the curriculum, they may receive very useful suggestions from students. Soliciting and valuing student input may be able to help educators create curriculum ideas more authentically, prior to launching lessons that may not work for all students (Cook-Sather, 2006; Romanowski, 2003).

According to Postman (1999), most of the knowledge we have is a result of asking questions. Paolo Freire believes that genuine questions from students should act as challenges to teachers. Instead, at many schools, students are made to listen to packaged knowledge delivered by the teacher. The traditional curriculum, according to Freire, permits few questions, and, as a result, student curiosity is repressed throughout their entire education (Freire & Faundez, 1989). In too many classrooms, students are asked to be good answer-givers, rather than question-askers. Thus, the student voice should be encouraged to ask probing and stimulating questions in order to help educators know what interests them about the subject or a particular lesson (Cook-Sather, 2006; Freire & Macedo 1987; Postman, 1999).

Although much of Freire’s developmental educational work was carried out with adults in the Brazilian peasant population, his applications have much to teach us about economically disadvantaged youth in the United States (Freire, 1998). According to Freire, the objective educator must understand that his/her “universal” truths have limits. Teachers work with students in order that those students gradually come to understand
the necessity of becoming agents of their own history, enabling them to transform their reality and liberate themselves from their present condition (Rossatto, 2005). It is significant to note that the mission of the College Bound Program includes the expectation that participating students become change agents in their schools and communities (College Bound Student Handbook, 2002). Freire believed that students can and should be educated to become change agents, initially for themselves, and eventually for others in the society (Giroux, 1988; Rossatto, 2005).

The emphasis given to student voice is an important element in its utilization. For example, listening to the student voice could simply refer to students taking a survey on the food in the school cafeteria. It could also refer to students creating, administering, and then analyzing the data from a cafeteria survey, making results known to the school community, and contributing to re-designing a new cafeteria menu, food line procedures, and physical arrangement. In this case, adults would fill the roles of mentor, data specialist, and/or interior designer, and then work cooperatively with students to suggest an alternative cafeteria plan (Mitra, 2004). The more significant use of student voice described in the second scenario above can create meaningful experiences that help meet the developmental needs of youth, particularly those young people who otherwise do not find meaning in the school experience (Mitra, 2002).

Ironically, not all students would welcome a more democratic school. Educators should be alert to student resistance for a more democratic education for at least two reasons. First, Taylor and Robinson (2009) remind us not merely to listen to those powerful students who enjoy the status quo. Some students may be too focused on the school “script.” That expectation requires “good” grades and other transcript credentials,
requirements necessary for college admission, or other ancillary school issues. These matters do not necessarily lead to a more lively dialog in the classroom, even if students have a chance to become more engaged learners (Hemmings, 2000). If educators are aware of student resistance in this way, they may be able to plan their curricular lessons accordingly.

Second, and more problematic for educators, is that the reality of schooling—wider (not deeper) scope and sequence curriculum coverage, accountability for high stakes testing, and increased amounts of paperwork that accompany tighter state and federal regulations, all conspire to crowd out any chance of authentic democratic dialog to occur (Groves and Welsh, 2010; Meier, 2002; Tse, 2000).

The research literature on the student voice suggests that the process of education should be more dynamic, socially engaging, and reflective for all teachers and all students. By encouraging all students to develop their voices, and by listening to those voices when thoughtfully expressed, educators, collaborating with students, may be able to expand the range of solutions to improve education for all (Allen, 1999; Yonezawa and Jones, 2009).

**Student Voice in Educational Reform.** The history of educational reform is a history of doing things to others, dominating rather than partnering in the process (Levin, 2000). In recent years, as states and the federal government have demanded more accountability at all levels, conversations around education have become more managerial and technocratic (Tierney, 2004). The highly focused academic curriculum is in danger of crowding out social, civic, and emotional learning that is also part of a young person’s
development while in school (Boston, 2005; Myatt & Kemp, 2004; Tse, 2000). The Federal government issues education directives to state governments and, in turn, state governments hand down directives to school districts. At the local level, school districts issue directives to principals, principals to teachers, and teachers to students. Students are at the bottom of the hierarchy, and have little to say in the reform process (Levin, 2000; Cook-Sather, 2009).

A more vibrant civic education in schools, one that includes active student participation in classroom and school policies, could gain the attention of the next phase of educational change in schools (Campbell, 2006; Civic Mission of Schools, 2003). Boston (2005) believes that the most important goal of public schools should be to teach young people to “take charge of their own learning and to become responsible, informed, and engaged citizens” (p. 11).

While much has been written about the need for adult involvement in education reform (Corbett and Wilson, 1995), the role of the student in these experiments has remained largely undefined and unexplored (Kaba, 2000; Let’s Ask the Students, 1997; Yonezawa & Jones, 2009). The “shared vision” that educators frequently speak to is usually shared exclusively by adults—school administrators, teachers, taxpayers, school committees, and parents—but rarely with students themselves (Rudduck, 1997; Weiner, 2005; Whitehead & Clough, 2004).

Goodlad (2000) urges schools to make a sincere effort to develop the essence of each individual student in the context of justice, fairness, responsibility, and mutual caring. It is difficult to take Goodlad’s suggestion seriously without listening more often to student voices. Pedro Noguera (2004) reminds educators to be more willing to listen
and solicit student opinions, in order to find ways to engage students more deeply in their own learning. The inclusion of students in the network of school improvements provides opportunities to hear new perspectives and to improve the relationships between teachers and students (Flutter, 2006; Howley-Rowe, 2002; Mitra, 2009).

Authentic learning—one of the goals of educational reform—has not materialized for most students (Noddings, 1992; Sizer, 2004). In many states the curriculum is increasingly dominated by the quest for school districts to help students pass high stakes written exams, while reducing the time for students to explore other educational endeavors (Goodlad, 2004; Myatt & Kemp, 2004; Westheimer & Kahne, 2003). This top-down approach compromises an important democratic ethos, one where those affected by policy and practice should have some input into process (Dewey, 1916; Whitehead & Clough, 2004). For many educators, one of the major functions of schools should be to help cultivate this democratic ethos in its students (Barber, 1997; Glickman, 1998). Furthermore, once the democratic ethos is put into practice, important, yet unanticipated questions may arise from students for and with teachers (Ackley, 2003).

For example, students are not often permitted input to curriculum ideas (Baines & Stanley, 2003; Tse, 2000). Yet, the integration of student voice into the curriculum may contribute to a more vibrant, relevant, and interdisciplinary curriculum for all students, regardless of a student’s economic background. Students may respond in a more active manner when they have significant input to their own learning outcomes (Cook-Sather, 2002, 2006; Groves & Welsh, 2010). Pope (2001) reports that students want to perform authentically engaging projects, specifically those that practice traditional adult roles that lead to real consequences and skill development. These engaging roles may be why
students are attracted to co-curricular activities, which provide many opportunities for responsibility, recognition, and reward by the community (Farrell, 1994).

Students are keen observers of adult behavior, and whether educators realize it or not, students evaluate adults in schools by the way teachers and administrators behave toward them in and out of their classrooms and other school settings (Coles, 1997; Eckert, 1989; Groves & Welsh, 2010). When students are given multiple opportunities to use their voice responsibly and creatively, and to learn from adults who model democratic practices in schools, they respond with an increased sense of responsibility (Mitra, 2009; Smith, 2003). A more explicit and transparent utilization of student voice would democratize the process of education for all stakeholders (Meier, 2003; Weiner, 2005).

Some educators recognize the importance of student voices, if change is to be effective and sustained (Cushman & What Kids Can Do, 2003; Yonezawa & Jones, 2009). The more complex the intended change, students, like teachers, should have more involvement, and should not be treated as the passive subjects of educators’ whims and experiments (Fullan, 1991; Hargreaves, 1996; Jones and Yonezawa, 2002). Students are not merely beneficiaries, but also participants in school, yet educational researchers rarely include their voices when students are the focus of their study (Corbett and Wilson 1995; Freeman 2005).

The justification for involving students in the educational reform process is threefold: 1) societal norms of democratic action suggestion that active participation of all stakeholders is essential (Chaltain, 2005; Corbett & Wilson, 1995; Sarason, 1990).
2) students should have multiple opportunities to anticipate and experiment with the change expected of them (*Creating Laboratories of Democracy*, 2002); and, 3) schools should involve those expected to change in the initial planning and development of ideas (Corbett and Wilson, 1995).

Furthermore, by not seeking effective input from a wide range of students, educators may lack meaningful data from which to make important decisions (Cook-Sather, 2009). The art of listening to students is often difficult for educators who must “cover” a large amount curriculum material in a limited time (Sizer & Sizer, 1999). By seeking student input about curriculum, assessment, instruction, extra-curricular activities, parent involvement, non-motivated learners, college preparation programs, and a myriad of other issues, educators can help themselves by actively listening to students (Brooker & Macdonald, 1999; Cook-Sather, 2006; Enos, 1999). For the relatively few whose voices are currently heard, those students feel respected and valued. On the other hand, those students who are not asked about their experiences feel disrespected and disempowered. Educators who listen only to token homogeneous voices may want to give chances to the many and varied voices in their schools (Berv, 2002; Yonezawa and Jones, 2009).

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) issued a national report, *Breaking Ranks*, in 1996, and one of its principal recommendations states that a “*school will accord meaningful roles in the decision making process to students, parents, and members of the staff to promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership*” (*Breaking Ranks*, 1996, p. 29, added emphasis). The
NASSP sequel, *Breaking Ranks* II (2004), refers to the need for educators to recognize all students in some way.

Educators might be aware that questions from students “can shock us into new awareness, if we accede a little. The ground shifts and we are forced (or invited) to make sense of all that is before us to discover something truer, more layered, more nuanced, more complex . . .” (Ayers, 2004, p. 64). By listening to participating students in the College Bound Program, students could reveal much about what they are learning that could improve the Program in the future.

When given the proper authority by guiding adults, students have proven to be quite capable of responding with insight and innate fairness that surprises both adults and teens (Campbell, 1994; McKibben, 2004; Mitra, 2002; *What Kids Can Do*, 2002). Students might be invited by staff and school administrators to actively participate in a truly shared vision for the school community (Fielding, 2004; *Let’s Ask the Students*, 1997). Students are more than willing to provide ideas about the implementation of innovations based on their personal experience (Brooker & Macdonald, 1999; Freeman, 2005; Romanowski, 2003).

Frequently, teachers and administrators perceive students in a new light after their genuine contribution is taken into account. This may be due to the fact that many students have a tendency to “tell it like it is,” without adhering to any accepted “party line” (Kushman, 1997; Mitra, 2009). If student voices can be used intelligently as a permanent feedback loop, educators may be able to include those voices consistently, as an integral part of the school improvement process (Cook-Sather, 2009; Kushman, 1997; McKibben, 2004).
**College Preparation Programs.** Before the 1960s, a college education was mainly a career pathway for wealthier students (Conley, 2005; Laguardia, 1998; Walton, 2009). College preparation programs for students from low SES backgrounds began in the mid-1960s, as part of the Great Society Programs of President Lyndon Johnson. Upward Bound, funded by the federal government via the Higher Education Act of 1965, is the largest and most well known of all college preparation programs. Upward Bound’s initial design was to enable economically disadvantaged students to enroll in and complete a program of postsecondary education (Grimard & Maddaus, 2002; McClure & Child, 1998; Zulli et al., 1998).

President Lyndon Johnson, who personally experienced poverty growing up in Texas, wanted to ensure that no student was prevented from attending college due to lack of funds. In his remarks on signing the Higher Education Act into law in 1965, Johnson, a former teacher, painfully recalled that his students could not attend college because they were too poor. With the passage of the Higher Education Act, Johnson believed that “a high school senior anywhere in this great land . . . can apply to any college or any university in any of the 50 states and not be turned away because his family is poor” (Johnson, 1965, p. 1102). Such was the idealistic thinking behind the launching of the Upward Bound Program. According to recent statistics, Upward Bound sponsors more than 700 programs nationwide and annually serves more than 55,000 students (*Upward Bound Program*, 2006).

In its early years, from 1965 to 1967, Upward Bound gave grants to educational institutions and permitted some freedom to experiment with teaching expected college knowledge to students from low SES backgrounds. Institutions were to measure their
own strengths, decide what they could offer students, and act accordingly (Snyder & Snyder, 1999). From those early years, a set of components began to emerge that proved successful for college preparation programs in general (Bergerson, 2009). Some of those components included a discussion of college itself, what is it and why an individual might attend college; site visits to college campuses; mentoring in academic subjects and/or career exploration; and parental education about college (Gandara, 2001; Kezar, 2001a).

Prior to the establishment of college preparation programs, many students from lower income backgrounds did not aspire to a college education. Not knowing why they should attend college, students from low SES backgrounds were also unaware of the procedures and requirements necessary for college. When the Upward Bound Program was conceived in the 1960s, the federal government recognized that economically disadvantaged students lacked the necessary social capital to continue their education beyond high school (Walton, 2009; Zulli et al, 1998).

Colleges and universities recognize that they must do more to prepare students who, in previous years, may not have aspired to or prepared for a college education (Deil-Amen & Tevis, 2010; Laguardia, 1998; McElroy and Armesto, 1999). Over the past forty years, collaborative efforts among schools, districts, and colleges and universities have increased admission to college for students from low SES backgrounds (Bergerson, 2009; Jones et al., 2002). Adding their efforts to those of the federal government, many colleges and universities have assisted low SES students prepare for and succeed in college level work (Gandara, 2001). Some college campuses are host sites for Upward Bound programs during the summer months, while other colleges and universities have
started their own programs, often as a partnership with a local school or district (Edens & Gilsinan 2005; Perna, 2002).

Effects of these college preparation programs were many. Student expectations about attending college increased, students enhanced their academic skills, selected more challenging courses, and high school grade point averages improved. Furthermore, students took required college entrance exams and parent expectations and knowledge of the college application process increased (Kezar, 2001a; Zulli et al, 1998).

College preparation programs have become very useful as a supplement to the school curriculum (What is TRIO, 2006). One of the reasons that college preparation programs fill this need is the occupational overload that many high school guidance counselors experience. Guidance counselors in schools with many students from low SES backgrounds are so overwhelmed with social and psychological demands of the job, that often they cannot do an adequate job of imparting college knowledge to their students (Savitz-Romer, 2004). In general, these college preparation programs target students who are underrepresented at the college level. The programs work under the assumption that most students from low SES backgrounds, of all races, do not have sufficient familial or support structures in place to help navigate the college preparation process (Grimard & Maddaus, 2002; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Supiano, 2009; Tierney, 2004).

Since the federal government led the initiative to assist economically disadvantaged students prepare for and enroll in college during the 1960s, shifts in the American and the international economy have demanded that all students pursue more formal education (Conley, 2005; Friedman, 2005). Major changes in the economy
underscore the situation because the earnings gap between a high school diploma and college degree has increased substantially over the last thirty years, making postsecondary education more essential than ever before (Wimberly & Noeth, 2004).

A wide array of program practices has evolved with the increase in college preparation programs, and there is no one accepted standard (Bergerson, 2009). Kezar (2001b) reports that more research and evaluation is necessary to discover if these programs are truly effective. In a large-scale survey of school/college partnerships, Laguardia (1998) found that no real data exists as to what works best in these collaborations. Some common practices that appear in programs deemed more successful include a permanent coordinator, either full time or part time; an adequate level of financial support; a written agreement that would codify goals and responsibilities between the college and the school district; and a periodic review of measurable goals and objectives (Bergerson, 2009; Laguardia, 1998).

Due to lack of standards in funding, the small size of individual programs, and the incredible diversity in programs with respect to goals, services provided, eligibility, and types of sponsors, it is difficult to generalize what is good (Edens & Gilsinan, 2005; Perna, 2002). The wide variation includes private vs. publicly funded programs, diverse selection criteria for participants, and lack of permanent staff members (Kezar, 2001b). Bergerson (2009) reviewed seven college preparation programs and concluded that a multi-faceted approach that combines academic and social goals, with much support, holds the most promise for success for participating students.

Other reports have highlighted the increased concern for the quality of these programs, because so few thorough reviews have been done to date (Gandara, 2001;
Ward, 2006; Zalaquett, 2006). Typical is the response from Perna (2002) who found “surprisingly little data are available to describe the types of programs that are targeting services to elementary and secondary school students . . . who have been historically underrepresented in higher education” (p. 65). In order to enhance research data for College Bound and other college preparation programs, I believe the voice of participating students in the College Bound Program may contribute essential information for all stakeholders in college preparation programs.

Research on college preparation programs has too often focused on the programs, and not on the individual students who participate in them (Gandara, 2001; Laguardia, 1998; Ward, 2006). The main point of this research is to focus on the words of individual students and what they say they are learning in the College Bound Program at Boston College in order to help future participating students as well as policy makers and instructors in the CB Program. It is important to remember that college preparation programs do not take on the same educational centrality as their schools for many participating students. The temporal nature of the programs, the lack of social context for many students, and the isolation of many college preparation programs may explain why some students do not participate as enthusiastically as many educators and policy makers think they should (Tierney, 2004).

Student Voice in College Preparation Programs. The literature reviewed in previous sections of this paper found that student voices should be solicited, cultivated, honored, and utilized more frequently throughout schools. So, too, could college preparation programs hear those constructively critical student voices. Yet, “far too often, the
literature on the transition to college and college preparations programs, in particular, is void of student voices” (Tierney, 2004, p. 952).

For many academically talented students from low SES backgrounds, being accepted to college can be a capricious and arduous task (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Kopkowski, 2005). First generation college applicants operate in unchartered waters and face a high degree of uncertainty. In addition, students from low SES backgrounds and their parents have little experience with the college process (Yamamura et al., 2010). Students who are first in their family to attend college are often perplexed in many ways. Some of their questions include: why attend college?; which college choices to make and why?; how to decide which college to attend?; and, how to finance a college education? (Luna De La Rosa, 2006; McDonough, 1997).

Experts in the college application process refer to three developmental stages of those students going to college. First, is the predisposition to attend college after completing secondary school. Second, is the search for information and materials relating to various colleges that a student might attend. Third, is the choice of the college itself, after the student has carefully considered various options (Perna, 2002). The College Bound Program very likely contributes to all three of these stages, and I have witnessed stages two and three taught and discussed in my own classes at College Bound.

Creating a predisposition to attend college is one important goal for college preparation programs with students from low SES backgrounds. Many parents of these students simply have less information with which to assist their children (Freeman, 2005). At a Boston Public School staffed by a GEAR-UP counselor, the adviser concluded that students think they cannot attend college because they do not have
sufficient information about preparing for and applying to college (Pappano, 2003). Many students from low income backgrounds have few role models who have attended college at all (Farrell, 1994; Liou et al, 2009). To help their children, parents from low SES backgrounds often look to primary and secondary teachers, counselors, and special programs to prepare students for higher education (Freeman, 2005; Savitz-Romer, 2004).

The financial aid process is difficult to decipher for many low-SES households (Luna De La Rosa, 2006). Parents are not always cooperative and/or sufficiently skilled to fill out complex financial aid forms. As a result, the financial aid process opens up large cracks in the pipeline to college, and frequently students from low SES backgrounds slip through them (Liou et al., 2009; Orfield, 1992). For many of these reasons we find a “college entrance gap” between minority students from low SES backgrounds and wealthier students.

Kopkowski (2005) reports that Black and Hispanic students make up 31% of the United States population, but only 17% of the college population. Research indicates that “typical” college choice decisions are dependent on parental expectations, income, and educational level, for those students whose parents have some college experience (Bateman & Hossler, 1996; Freeman, 2005). Low SES students, by definition, have neither the benefits of a comfortable household income nor a family member who can assist in the college application process (Shaw et al., 2009; Venezia & Kirst, 2005). To emphasize the point that these students cannot depend on family income, Carter & Robinson (2002) found that rural students from low SES backgrounds on scholarship were so worried about their family’s economic condition, they wanted to know if they could send some of the scholarship money home.
Berv advances the notion that students prize three R’s necessary to student-centered school improvement, and he states that students list relevance, relationships, and recognition as three characteristics expected in a good school (Berv, 2002). If these characteristics are extended to college preparation programs, looking closely at relevance, relationships, and recognition, may help policy makers and staff members discover what works and what does not work by listening to participating students.

Recent research contends that the future of education increasingly involves working with, drawing from, and learning with others (Hoerr, 2003; Senge, 2000). Rather than college preparation programs being designed for students, we may discover that it is more beneficial for all if college preparation programs are designed with students. Listening to and documenting student voices in college preparation programs may contribute to the research literature because “we are still very much in the dark about what works best in [college preparation] programs” (Swail, 2000, p. 98).

While researchers know that high school cohorts tend to help each other prepare for college, there is still a question of quality and quantity regarding how much academic, financial, and social knowledge is essential in college preparation programs (Edens & Gilsinan, 2005; Tierney, 2004). The literature informs us that other program components such as mentoring, tutoring, career shadowing, and visits to colleges can be successful when done well. If done poorly, those same components could have a negative effect on students trying to prepare for college (Bergerson, 2009; Laguardia, 1998; Swail, 2000).

The social context of a college preparation program may also be problematic for students who find themselves in the limbo of a well-intentioned, but part-time, university administered program and their full-time, socially connected, high school experience
(Tierney, 2004). Attempting to discover how students perceive the cooperative arrangement between the public school they attend and the university trying to assist them may prove instructive for educators at both institutions (Bergerson, 2009). Student voices in this ongoing debate about the cooperation between colleges and secondary schools, may reveal interesting perspectives that would help everybody involved, not least the students themselves (Cook-Sather, 2009).

Tierney observes that in the body of research about college preparation programs, the student voice is missing. “Perhaps if children’s faces, bodies, thoughts and desires were more central, then practitioners and policy analysts would be less obsessive in their language over utilitarian outcomes” (Tierney, 2004, p. 953). This research intends to help fill this void by listening to participating students at the College Bound Program at Boston College.

Summary. The fundamental goal of teaching is the empowerment of others—to teach students how to think and act independently in a constructive manner (Ayers, 2004; Cook-Sather, 2009). By soliciting participating student input from students at the College Bound Program, the research intends to demonstrate that students can contribute valuable programmatic suggestions when invited to do so. In fact, one purpose of a college education is to cultivate a sense of independent and critical thinking that is expected to last a lifetime (Boyer, 1987; Conley, 2005).

However, the dialog surrounding the entire educational enterprise has become primarily managerial and technical, mostly adults talking to adults. Student voices are absent for most of that dialog (Tierney, 2004), and by not cultivating those voices we are
remiss in our duty as educators to develop students who will play an active role in our democratic society for the future (Glickman, 1998; Goodlad, 2004). As schools and their affiliated college preparation programs present opportunities for students to evolve into active democratic citizens, educators are obliged to instruct pupils and defend the idea of a public, not merely private, interest (Meier, 2002).

Many students, especially those from low SES backgrounds, begin their post-secondary education with little knowledge of how to advocate for themselves (Yonezawa and Jones, 2009). These same students frequently carry burdens associated with their K-12 experiences where ill-equipped schools, inadequate teachers, and/or an unchallenging curriculum discourage the development of a strong academic identity (Bowen, 2005; Carter & Robinson, 2002; Welch et al., 1996). For students who are the first to attend college in their households, good school advisors, knowledgeable and caring classroom teachers, and/or pre-college programs contribute immensely (Grimard & Maddaus, 2002; Howard, 2003; Tierney, 2004). Yet, as useful and helpful as many pre-college programs have proven to be, only 25% of students from low SES backgrounds participated in such programs (Bergerson, 2009; O’Brien & Shedd, 2001).

Clearly, much work is required to teach more students from low SES backgrounds about “college knowledge” (Deil-Amen & Tevis, 2010; McElroy & Armesto, 1998; Ortiz & Gonzales, 2000; Savitz-Romer, 2004). If students are lucky enough to be in the “right” district or school, they may experience the advantages of a high quality college preparation program (Carter & Robinson, 2002; Swail, 2000). In the College Bound Program at Boston College, sixty students from Brighton High School and the West
Roxbury Education Complex may be some of the lucky ones. These students may also point out how College Bound could improve its program for future students.

The CB Program exists to fill that college knowledge gap and has contributed much for more than two decades (College Bound Twentieth Anniversary!, 2007-2008). By talking directly with participating students in the College Bound Program, and allowing student voices to tell us what they are learning, this research will contribute toward improving the College Bound Program in the future. Furthermore, students may also feel they have a stake in the College Bound Program, and that College Bound is flexible and responsive to their concerns. In this regard the intent is to help students feel like participatory citizens in a program that is not merely for them, but about them (Let’s Ask the Students, 1997; Mitra, 2009).

By listening to students, administrators and instructors in the College Bound Program could learn more about what participating students truly think about the overall design and goal, the curriculum, the schedule, and other aspects of the Program. Students may be very satisfied with the entire College Bound operation as they experience it. At the same time, they may contribute ideas that program supporters, administrators, mentors, or teachers have not previously considered. (Cook-Sather, 2009) reminds us that “including new voices with different ways of speaking in ongoing conversations . . . can prompt new ways of thinking because, even when those voices say familiar things, they sound different coming from differently positioned people” (p. 224).

Whatever students say about what they are learning in the College Bound Program, the democratic process of engaging student voices, listening to those voices,
and including student input as an integral part of the planning process, can only benefit the students and improve the College Bound Program at Boston College.

The methodology for the study will be described in Chapter Three.
Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Introduction. In the first two chapters it has been established that college knowledge is more essential to young people than ever before, and that federal and state government, universities, and foundations have attempted to facilitate the process of access to college for students from low SES backgrounds. One method of accomplishing this task was through the creation of college preparation programs, specifically to benefit low SES students.

The literature review in chapter two supported the view that students’ voices are often overlooked and underutilized in educational programs where they are the main participants and beneficiaries. The hypothesis in this paper suggests that the inclusion of participating student voices in the College Bound Program at Boston College can offer unique insights that could be helpful to Boston College staff members who manage, finance, and teach in the College Bound Program. This chapter describes the research methodology utilized to support this idea.

The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What do participating students tell us they are learning at College Bound, and
2. What suggestions/recommendation do students have to improve the Program.

Strategy and Rationale. The design of the research is a qualitative case study that asked participating students at College Bound at Boston College what they are learning and what suggestions they have for improving the Program. A case study is “a detailed examination of one or more events, setting . . . or other bounded system” (McMillan &
Wergin, 2002). A qualitative case study also “seeks to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (Merriam, 2001).

A qualitative case study was selected for this study for many reasons. Qualitative research occurs in a naturalistic setting—it goes to the place of action and tries to figure out the how and why there (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998; Rossman and Rallis, 1998). Qualitative research also provides a rich and multi-faceted descriptive approach that focuses on meaning and explanation, responding and generating ongoing questions with a variety of interpretations (McEwan and McEwan, 2003). Qualitative case studies strive for a holistic view of the phenomenon. In addition, including the participant’s point of view, or emic perspective, is a major goal of qualitative case studies (Creswell, 2008; Morse, 1992).

One of the research questions of the study was to assess what students say they are learning in the College Bound Program at Boston College. By including participating students’ thoughts and feelings, as expressed through their own words in surveys, interviews, and focus groups, the research intended to ensure that student voices are documented, actively listened to, and considered when the College Bound staff reviews its program offerings each year. The important point was to give students the opportunity to express their own opinions about what specific information or experiences assisted them during their time in the College Bound Program.

The second research question seeks input from students to inform the organizers of College Bound about how the Program could be improved for future participants. Students commented on their own experiences in the Program. By using surveys,
individual interviews, and focus groups that include much student generated data, the researcher intends that the reader will be able to live and re-live the College Bound experience through students’ spoken words (Schostak, 2002). In addition, the researcher synthesized student generated data with descriptive writing and the inclusion of other data, such as official College Bound documents, observations, and field notes, in order to convey a broader and deeper emic and etic perspective for the reader (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006).

The researcher was a participant/observer in the College Bound Program for four years, from 2002-2006. He attended many College Bound Saturday sessions as an instructor, an auditor, and a chaperone on field trips. As a result, the researcher maintained field notes from his observations over a four year period. Some of these observations included students’ reactions to specific College Bound experiences. For example, field notes contained a record of the animated excitement felt by students at a dance performance or on a field trip. Those notes also contained the researcher’s memos of assignments given and collected from students in a computer lab. As part of an assignment in my classes, students were asked to diagram their weekly time budget and to research those colleges in which they expressed an interest. These assignments became artifacts that I was able to utilize in my field notes.

In addition to field notes and observations, official documents may help provide a social context for the reader, as they are often produced for outside readers and financial supporters. These documents generally represent the administrative voice of a given program (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). College Bound documents include statistical and demographic information, as well as Saturday schedules, yearbooks, and facebooks. To
help the reader understand how the Saturday schedule appeared to the students, representative Saturday schedules are included in appendix D.

Multiple sources of information were sought and used, because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective on any given program. By using a combination of data instruments, the researcher was able to triangulate – that is, use different sources to cross-check findings (Patton, 1990). Triangulation is necessary to ensure that the information has credibility, and that the research data has come from diverse sources (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Triangulation also helped enhance validity in the study by analyzing what participants said in different settings using diverse data collection instruments (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Krathwohl, 1998). Using a combination of data types increased the validity as the strengths of one source can compensate for the weaknesses of another source (Merriam, 2001). Each of the data types utilized in this study will be described in the following pages.

**Survey.** A survey contributes much to data generation because a large amount of information can be collected from a representative sample group over a short period of time. The data from the survey helped to standardize information for further analysis (Krathwohl, 1998). The survey was anonymous in hopes that students would be candid in their responses and suggestions (Robson, 2002). A semi-structured survey was used because the researcher could not anticipate possible responses from students and could not structure the range of potential answers students may have offered (Morse, 1992). Survey data was analyzed immediately after it was collected, and the responses from the
survey helped to add or clarify questions in the interview or focus group stages (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006).

A survey has its place as one method of data collection, but is most valuable when used in tandem with other methods (Gillham, 2000). Each participating student was invited to complete the survey as a way to contribute to the improvement of the College Bound Program for themselves and future students.

A sample copy of the survey is included in Appendix A.

**Individual semi-structured interviews.** An interview is used to gather data because it is a purposeful conversation directed by one person to get information from another (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). A key characteristic in qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon from the participant’s perspective, not the researcher’s perspective (Merriam, 2001). Toward that end, Holstein and Gubrium (1995) inform us that interviewees are not so much repositories of knowledge as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with the interviewer. The “active” interview helps create new meaning by eliciting information in a comfort zone of conversation between the two people participating in the interview. This comfort zone should be established and provided by the interviewer (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

The researcher conducted all student interviews so that new knowledge emerged from the conversation. As the interviewer, I had to be aware of my personal biases, and not reveal “expected” responses. During each interview, I hope I was careful to listen intently and actively, probe intelligently when necessary, and allow the student to tell
his/her story (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). The purpose of the interview was not to evaluate, but to understand the meaning of each student’s experience (Seidman, 1998).

Concern is often expressed by the inherent unequal power relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (Merriam, 2001). The researcher’s role as a participant/observer/teacher in College Bound for four years helped mitigate the unequal power differential. The researcher was familiar to many of the students in the Program. It was my hope to ensure that a comfortable conversation zone was established such that students could discuss any aspect of College Bound, be it positive or negative, and not feel pressured by the researcher’s presence (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). Students were specifically asked not to hold back opinions. To underscore the cooperative nature of this research, students were invited to participate in this phase of the research as a collaborator rather than a “subject” of research. Students were informed that their ideas are the focus of this study, and to be as open and candid as they want to be.

All interviews were audio-taped, coded and analyzed by the researcher. The recordings were professionally transcribed and the researcher maintains the tapes and transcripts in his home office.

A copy of the questions that began each interview is included in Appendix A.

Focus Groups. In addition to a survey and individual semi-structured interviews to elicit student thought, focus groups were also convened. Focus groups are a “carefully planned discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 1). Focus groups can be an efficient
way to collect data for qualitative studies, because one can gather a significant amount and range of data from several people at the same time (Robson, 2002; Litosseliti, 2003).

Focus groups have some advantages over other data gathering instruments. They can be a more natural forum for some individuals because the group members take the spotlight away from an individual and share comments among the group (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Focus groups can emphasize common issues that affect everybody in the group (Creswell, 2008). The group dynamic can encourage people to open up and enjoy the experience more than an interview (Robson, 2002).

On the other hand, within focus groups, participants can influence and are influenced by others in the group, and the process is less easily controlled by the moderator/interviewer (Litosseliti, 2003). Personality clashes and power struggles sometimes occur in focus groups (Robson, 2002), and to alleviate this possibility, each focus group will contain the same gender. In the researcher’s experience, it is also possible that male and female adolescents can “play” to each other, flirt, or otherwise distract each other from the main purpose of the focus group. Due to the fact that College Bound female students outnumber male students by approximately two to one, two female focus groups and one male focus group were formed. Each focus group contained four students. Two groups consisted of four seniors each—one with four female students and one with four male students. The third focus group consisted of four female students—three juniors and one sophomore.

Focus groups may also provide ideas for interview questions later in the process or they can be used to confirm data (Litosseliti, 2003). For this project, all three focus
groups convened after the interviews occurred and confirmed much of the data from the individual interviews and the surveys.

As the researcher and moderator of the focus group, it was essential that I establish and maintain the focus of the group and put participants at ease. Due to the four years the researcher attended College Bound sessions, I hoped that my familiarity with students would make them feel comfortable as participants. By explaining the ground rules before the session, I expected participants to contribute their personal thoughts on the topics as they arose. It was the researcher’s role to guide, stimulate, and facilitate discussion in and among the group (Robson, 2002).

The focus group sessions were audio-taped, coded and analyzed by the researcher. The recordings were professionally transcribed and the researcher maintains the tapes and transcripts in his home office. A list of questions that served as prompts for the focus groups is included in Appendix A.

**Observations.** Observations serve to triangulate the data and give a context for the reader. Observations can give a more naturalistic description of the setting, the participants, and the interactions of the participating students in this study (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 2001). By making observations, the researcher may also perceive information that is unlikely to emerge directly through student voices (Eisner, 1991). Rich veins of information are often found through direct observation of the social phenomena. “What people do and say, and how they do it and say it, is important to note” (Eisner, 1991, p. 182).
By observation, I was able to notice incidents of high or low interest demonstrated by students. For example, when a guest speaker from the Boston College Admissions Department generated many good questions from the student audience, the observations reflected that college admissions officers captured student interests. Conversely, if students were scheduled for a field trip to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and few students attended, the observations might indicate that low participation may signify low interest.

The researcher had been a College Bound teacher on Saturdays and had many opportunities to interact with College Bound students. Participating in College Bound for four years schooled me in what to observe. The writer also noticed some changes in the College Bound Program over that time. In some instances the researcher was a participant/observer and other cases he was an observer only, and had multiple experiences to record observations.

**Field Notes.** As the written account of observations, field notes provided another valuable data source. The unobtrusive manner in which the researcher generated field notes may contribute to a richer description of the College Bound Program (Johnson and Christensen, 2000). Field notes were often written as the event occurred and sometimes written very soon after the activity was completed (Krathwohl 1998). Typically, when the researcher was simply an observer at a College Bound community meeting, an art class, a dance performance, or luncheon with undergraduate Boston College student/mentors and College Bound students, field notes were simultaneously generated. At other times, when the researcher was a College Bound instructor in one of the college
libraries or computer labs, or a chaperone on a field trip, notes were written soon after the event occurred.

Students were often required to complete college knowledge assignments during classroom sessions with the researcher. The assignments may have required a paper to be handed in or emailed to me at a later time. Many of these assignments were about college selection procedures, financial aid explanations, summer activities, and student time allocation during a typical week at school and home. All assignments contributed in some way to what students learned in the College Bound Program. By receiving a completed assignment from every student, the researcher could make a reasonable assumption that students wanted to learn the material from the lesson. Some of these assignments generated field notes.

The researcher considers student-generated information to be the primary data sources in this study, but field notes corroborated (or questioned) much of what students said. To ensure that the emic perspective is maintained, however, member checking was utilized to verify field notes for accuracy (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). Participating students were asked to verify the field notes for accuracy. I was able to confirm this with undergraduate students at the West Roxbury Learning Complex before and after our interviews. In this way the field notes were used as a supportive or supplementary method to collect data that gave perspective to data collected by other means (Robson, 2002). Observations and field notes added to the triangulation of the data and helped to strengthen the analysis (Merriam, 2001).

Documents. College Bound documents exist separately and independently of the research undertaken in this case study. The information contained in College Bound
documents supported the research framework because these documents are not created by
the personal whims of people whose goodwill is essential to collecting data via
interviews, surveys, and focus groups (Merriam, 2001). Documents are unobtrusive
measures that contribute to the triangulation of data sources. Documents tend to be
permanent records, allowing for reliability checks and replication studies (Robson, 2002).

The researcher analyzed documents and artifacts generated by the College Bound
Program in order to discover if students tell us whether they learn what College Bound
publications say they will learn as participants in the Program. For example, if a
document states that College Bound students will learn about the college application and
financial aid processes (College Bound Handbook, 2004), that information might be
sought in an interview as a way to cross-check data.

Many college preparation programs differ in their goals, criteria for participation,
and definitions of success (Bergerson, 2009; Swail, 2001). Analyzing official
documents will help readers situate the official intent of the College Bound Program.
Some of these documents introduced participating students for the benefit of instructors
and mentors (College Bound Facebook, 2003-2004). Other documents included
statistical data generated over many years, such as the number of students attending the
College Bound Program and the list of college acceptances of seniors in a given year.
Documents also included written information made available to participating students and
their parents about College Bound procedures. Documents exist that described the intent
and description of College Bound for the benefit of the Boston Public Schools and
Boston College, as well as financial supporters of the College Bound Program (College
College Bound Founder/Director. Professor George Ladd was the original faculty member appointed to launch the College Bound Program at Boston College in the late 1980s. Previous to establishing a formal program, Dr. Ladd was a liaison to the Boston Public Schools for a decade before the founding of College Bound, and he communicated much knowledge about the needs of the Boston Public Schools to the Boston College administration. Professor Ladd was the Founding Director of the College Bound Program in 1987 and served in that role until 2001-2002 (Heffernan, 2003). Through phone calls, emails and personal interviews with the researcher, Professor Ladd was very generous sharing his time and information.

Summary of Data Sources. Multiple methods of research served to triangulate the research process, thereby establishing its conclusions on more solid ground (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). Using student generated data—surveys, interviews, and focus groups—the researcher wanted to hear directly from students which components of the College Bound program contributed most to their college preparation experience. From these data sources students suggested improvements as well. Using other data sources—observations, field notes, and documents—helped to triangulate the student-generated data. Because qualitative case studies strive for a holistic view of the phenomenon studied, utilizing multiple methods of data collection expanded and enriched the case study database (Creswell, 2008; Morse, 1992).

Participant/Observer—Pros and Cons. Advantages for a participant/observer can result from developing a more informal and intimate relationship with the population observed. This, in turn, may lead to more thoughtful responses to questions (Cohen et al., 2000). For some participant/observers, the problem of entry to the research site is
problematic (Lancy, 1993). In this case it was non-existent because the researcher participated as an instructor in the College Bound Program for four years from 2002-2006. The research project grew out of my increased interest in the participating students and the operations of the College Bound Program I witnessed on each College Bound Saturday. I wanted to learn more about intentions and perspectives of participating students. By associating with the students and the Program for four years, I believe I built a strong rapport with students. I also witnessed changes to the Program over that period of time that some students may have also witnessed, and that shared experience may have helped create a common background for discussion (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998).

Two main disadvantages as a participant/observer concern the presence of observer bias and observer effects (Gay and Airasian, 2000; Merriam, 2001). The personal bias of the observer may find its way into the analysis, if the researcher is not sufficiently objective to be aware of it. Due to the fact that many students’ own words will be included in the analysis, it was more difficult for personal bias to creep into the analysis. Although never entirely eliminated in qualitative research, bias can be reduced by the awareness that it exists (Gay and Airasian, 2000). The input of two critical readers, who read the entire report, helped lessen the potential bias.

On the other hand, observer effects could be very powerful in this study, and the researcher was careful to minimize its influence. As a participant in College Bound for four years, students recognized that I was part of the College Bound Program. They may have been reluctant to say or write anything that appeared too critical towards College Bound. To mitigate the observer effect, the letter
of invitation seeking participation specifically invited students to be constructively critical. The “senior student” factor may have worked to lessen the importance of observer effects as well. Senior students had already completed their College Bound requirements, and many of them had applied to colleges by the time the interview process occurred. In effect, seniors had no reason to hold back, and were under less pressure to fall victim to observer effect. As for the four undergraduate students (3 juniors, 1 sophomore) who were interviewed, I encouraged all of them to answer as candidly as they could. The letter sent to students is included in Appendix B.

**Human Subjects Consideration.** The procedures of the Institutional Review Board at Boston College and the Boston Public Schools were followed throughout the research process (See Appendix C for relevant documents). In addition, the following people were approached with a request to proceed with the research. The Director of College Bound in 2007, Professor Michele Montavon, was approached, via a formal letter, to grant permission to carry out research on the College Bound Program. College Bound students on Saturdays are students in the Boston Public Schools during the week, and, as a result, the researcher was required to follow the Boston Public Schools Research Protocol. Letters of permission were delivered to the Director of Research for the Boston Public Schools, as well as the relevant district’s cluster leaders and the respective Headmasters of both Brighton High School and the West Roxbury Education Complex. Each letter was returned with permission to carry out the research at College Bound.

Letters informing parents of the interview and focus group participation of this research project at College Bound went home with students who expressed an interest to
participate in the research. Parents were required to sign the letter granting permission for their child to be included in the study. In all cases students who were allowed to be interviewed returned their parents’ signed letter to me on a Saturday at College Bound.

Prior to selecting the twelve students who finally participated, each participating student in the senior class received a letter to participate in the interview and focus group process. The letter described the purpose of the interview, its voluntary nature, and the fact that students could discontinue the interview anytime. The letter described to students that the researcher does not seek “subjects,” but partners in conversation. The letter also mentioned how much the researcher valued students’ input to the process. At the start of the interview, one goal was to persuade students that this was to be more of an even-handed discussion than a one-sided interview. Students were reminded that they are collaborators in this research process and that the conclusions and recommendations will only be as effective as their voices (Gay and Airasian, 2000). Copies of consent letters are included in Appendix B.

**Sample Selection.** The performance of a sample is used to make inferences about the larger group, from which the sample was selected (Gay and Airasian, 2000). A purposeful sample formed the basis of students who were to be interviewed and to be included in focus groups. Each student interviewed was also a member of a focus group. All senior students were invited to participate with the understanding that twelve seniors will be selected via lottery. Because the interviews took place near the end of the school year, only eight seniors were available to participate. I accepted all eight senior students
who volunteered. A lottery was held for juniors and sophomores to participate and three juniors and one sophomore were selected.

To remain consistent with the gender balance of the College Bound participants, twelve (8 female, 4 male) individual students were interviewed and the same twelve students formed three (2 all female, 1 all male) focus groups. All students selected and interviewed were compensated with two movie tickets. Students who wished to participate, but were not selected in the lottery, received one movie ticket. The sample consent letter that invited students to participate in this research is included in Appendix B.

**Data Collection Procedures.** The order of data collection occurred in the following manner: 1) the administration of an anonymous paper and pencil survey to all students who were in attendance at College Bound; 2) twelve individual interviews with students; and, 3) meeting with three focus groups of students.

An anonymous semi-structured survey of all participating students, who were in attendance on a particular Saturday in the College Bound Program, was administered by the researcher during the spring of 2007. The four-page semi-structured survey included a mix of close-ended and open-ended questions. All participating students included sophomore, junior, and senior students. The survey contained objective and Likert Scale questions, as well as a space for open-ended responses. The open-ended responses provided students with an opportunity to make suggestions about what they believe they are learning at College Bound. The survey also provided space where any participating student, from all three grades, could make suggestions for improving the College Bound Program. The survey required approximately twenty to thirty minutes to complete. On
the day the survey was administered, twenty nine students (@ 48% of the entire College Bound population) completed it. Surveys were color coded, using three different paper colors, one color for each grade. In this way the researcher could easily discern the senior responses from those of sophomores and juniors. The analysis of the surveys provided more areas to explore in the interviews and focus groups, especially as survey data were analyzed soon after completion (Merriam, 2001).

A past acting director of College Bound granted permission to begin a pilot survey and interview process in 2003. A pilot survey was given to a previous graduating class of seniors and pilot interviews were completed with two or three seniors during the same year. Some of the survey questions form the “platform” for the interview. Fellow graduate students in a “Design of Research” class also contributed suggestions to the survey and interview questions.

The pilot survey was useful in that it demonstrated the necessity for questions to encompass broader issues than the academic experiences provided at College Bound (Litosolleti, 2003). For example, students in the pilot interview mentioned how expensive it was to eat lunch at the Boston College campus. As a result of the pilot process, the survey and interview questions will ensure that students have an opportunity to speak broadly about their College Bound experience.

Data was also collected by one-on-one semi-structured interviews with students. Twelve current students were interviewed. Those interviewed had participated in the CB Program for two or more years. It was assumed that seniors and juniors would describe or suggest more ideas and information about College Bound, and eight of the twelve interviewees were seniors.
The student interviews revealed much individual information in this process. Not only are students the reason the CB Program exists, but they also experience events differently from the adults involved in the Program (Cook-Sather, 2009). Interviews with students asked detailed questions about the various components of College Bound. Students were asked how they initially found out about the Program and what they expected to receive by participating in College Bound. Some questions included information gleaned from College Bound official documents to investigate whether students say they learn what Program documents state they should learn.

Interviews occurred on Saturdays for seniors when they attended College Bound sessions in May, 2007. Due to interviews occurring during the end of the school year, the interviews with the three juniors and one sophomore took place at West Roxbury Learning Complex during a school day in May, 2007. Interviews were audiotaped, coded, and analyzed by the researcher. Student names were not used. Audiotapes were professionally transcribed.

Three focus groups met during spring of 2007 to discuss the College Bound Program. Focus group sessions took twenty to thirty minutes and were audiotaped. Two of the focus groups consisted of eight senior students who had volunteered to be interviewed. As co-creators of knowledge about the College Bound Program, senior students who participated in the focus groups helped establish more credibility and gave deeper meaning to students’ experiences. The focus groups gave many students a chance to speak without the interviewer channeling or responding to every comment (Litosseleti, 2003).
As three-year participants who were in the process of applying to college, it was expected that seniors learned much that the College Bound Program offered. The researcher emphasized that their legacy to College Bound Program was their considered opinion about what they say have learned in the Program as well as suggestions for improvement.

**Data Analysis.** Data analysis was based on written surveys, transcripts of interviews and focus groups, all of which involve direct student input. These data sources were supplemented with the researcher’s observations and field notes, as well as College Bound documents. All data sources form the case study database (Merriam, 2001).

Dey (1993) informs us that: “data analysis is concerned with conceptual clarification and the careful specification of meaning” (p. 246). To enhance the meaning of the College Bound experience, the researcher has maintained written comments, notes, and memos from College Bound sessions that helped organize and focus the data analysis. Creating visual charts, tables, and graphs of key concepts, categories, and topics also helped the researcher convey meaning to himself and others (Gay and Airasian, 2000).

The report utilized the constant comparative method throughout the study. The constant comparative method allowed for continuous checking for topics to be placed in appropriate categories for analysis (Merriam, 2001). Distinctive characteristics emerged as more concepts were teased out from collected data. Categories were modified as necessary to fit new data (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). The point of the constant comparative method is to be able to understand and explain the collected data (Gay and Airasian, 2000) and to be open to whatever significant data emerges (Krathwohl, 1998).
In this way, the discrete bits of collected data start to make sense to the researcher (Merriam, 2001).

It is important to note that data collection continued, even after data analysis had begun, as they are not discrete operations. For example, repeated listening to the first taped interviews helped me hone my interview procedure in order to improve the process of asking questions during later interviews (Merriam, 2001). Likewise, writing memos and notes after one focus group met, improved the experience of the second focus group. Both data collection and data analysis were intertwined in this way and were considered in tandem (Gay and Airasian, 2000).

After some early data was collected, coding began. Coding is a shorthand process that helps organize generated data from participants. Coding also contributes to the formulation of concept analysis as the research moves towards its conclusion (Merriam, 2001). The case study database was coded at three levels—identifying information about the collected data, the researcher’s interpretation of that data for analysis, and classifying my interpretation into research topics. During the coding process it was important not to have too many pre-conceived categories or concepts, as those ideas are intended to emerge from the data that has been collected (Creswell, 2008; Krathwohl, 1998; Dey, 1993).

For this study the coding was guided by the two major research questions: 1) What do students tell us they are learning at College Bound, and 2) What suggestions or recommendations would they offer to improve the College Bound Program for future students.
Looking for categories and patterns throughout the data, the researcher listed possible codes that began emerging around clustered concepts. These concepts became the second level of coding, and eventually evolved into research topics. Creswell defines these three levels of coding as open, axial, and selective. Open coding creates initial categories, axial coding selects one category and relates it to others, and selective coding integrates the relationships of axial categories (Creswell, 2008).

Reading and re-reading all transcripts and repeatedly listening to tape recordings, the researcher created a series of notes and memos that led to initial classification (Gay and Airasian, 2000). For example, preliminary coding of the survey looked for what students say they are learning, as well as student suggestions for improvement. By initially classifying in this way, the interview and focus group process were made more efficient from the start (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006).

All transcriptions were analyzed for consistencies and inconsistencies, as well as the structuring of preliminary concepts. Coding was completed sentence by sentence as the researcher attempted to break the analysis into categories. Concepts did emerge as discrete bits of information and were organized from these categories.

Codes were assigned that attempt to make meaning of students’ comments. A few of these codes had been pre-determined by the survey, while many others emerged from students as interviews and focus groups occurred. Codes helped to “chunk” information so that meaning developed from multiple methods of data generation (Miles and Huberman, 1994).
Reliability. Reliability in research ensures consistent results when using different data instruments. It was essential that students were asked to say what they are learning about College Bound across multiple data types (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000). Reliability can also be enhanced by the creation of an audit trail (Merriam, 2001). The detailed description of data collection and the inclusion of sample data collection instruments in the appendices create part of the audit trail for readers and future researchers.

Enhanced reliability often results from triangulation, whereby multiple methods of data generation can compensate for weaknesses in any one method (Freebody, 2003). The researcher’s lengthy observation period, utilization of field notes, and uniform procedures for administering the survey, carrying out interviews, and facilitating all focus groups contributed to the reliability of the study. This transparency of the process also contributed to its reliability (Lancy, 1993). It should be noted that reliability must be balanced against any biases that the researcher may have carried with him into the study (Krathwohl, 1998).

Internal Validity. As the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the researcher represented a major factor as a guarantor of internal validity. Merriam (2001) reminds the researcher that a “disciplined subjectivity” is essential to enhance internal validity. Extended time spent in the College Bound Program as a participant/observer and constant reflection by the researcher helped to ensure internal validity of the research (Gay and Airasian, 2000). In addition, the incorporation of the words and ideas of participating students helped to keep the bias of the researcher in check.
The design of multiple methods of data collection provided a triangulation of sources, such that no one source dominated the data collection. Each data source has strengths and weaknesses, and by using all of them, a balanced set of data source material was ensured (Merriam, 2001). Using a survey for all students, and tape-recorded interviews and focus groups for selected students, facilitated the researcher’s task to ask similar questions across different data sources. The long period of observation, the inclusion of student input into the process, the triangulation of data sources, and the awareness of the researcher’s biases, all served to enhance the internal validity of the study (Merriam, 2001).

**External Validity.** External validity tells us how much a certain technique or process can be applied to another setting or group of people (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). Recognizing that not all college preparation programs contain identical variables such as the amount of financial support, available facilities, curriculum ideas, accessible human resources, and numbers of students who will attend (Edens and Gilsanan, 2005), the researcher submits that the external validity of this study has its limits. Much previous research on college preparation programs, however, has been considered “advocacy” research with little objective data (Bergerson, 2009; Laguardia, 1998; Swail, 2000). Research that includes participating student voices may contribute valid data that moves beyond advocacy research. If student voices could be utilized consistently in future studies of college preparation programs, increased external validity may be enhanced.

Schofield (2002) informs us that qualitative researchers have three possible targets of generalization: qualitative research can study what is, what may be, and what
could be. If other college preparation programs recognize valid ideas in what students
tell us they learned at the College Bound Program at Boston College, some of the student
experiences and suggestions mentioned here could be incorporated into those programs.
Listening attentively to student voices may help college preparation programs evolve
from “what is” to “what could be.”

Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) make a relevant point by contrasting the idea of
generalization between quantitative and qualitative research. In quantitative research, the
researcher makes the case for generalization. In qualitative research the individual
practitioner makes the decision as to the external validity of the research (Fraenkel and
Wallen, 2006). In other words, future readers/practitioners will have to ultimately decide
if this study has external validity.

One of the major goals of this research is a rich description of the participating
students’ thoughts and reflections about the College Bound experience at Boston College.
Students’ voices, perceptions, and suggestions could add much valid information that
lead to “serendipitous findings and new integrations” for future students at College
Bound (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.1). The intention is for these ideas to be shared,
discussed, and investigated further by all College Bound stakeholders.

We now turn to chapter 4, data analysis and interpretation.


Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Introduction. As reported in earlier chapters, the research literature informs us that students from low SES backgrounds experience difficulty accessing information about the many aspects of college—from the essential rigor of academic preparation to the detailed requirements of the application processes for admission and financial aid (Deil-Amen & Tevis, 2005; Supiano, 2009). Furthermore, guidance counselors in low-SES schools cannot focus on the college information they know students require due to the myriad social problems they must confront as part of the normal school day (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Savitz-Romer, 2004).

In addition, many low income students possess neither sufficient knowledge nor the social capital to access a college campus on their own. While middle and upper income students routinely visit colleges with their parents or older siblings, most low income students do not have opportunities to visit colleges with their families. It is much more difficult for low-SES students to see for themselves what a college campus looks and feels like. As previously mentioned, one reporter has observed that college is a foreign world to many urban students from low-SES backgrounds (Pappano, 2003).

The intent of this research has been to synthesize information provided by participating students with the observations and field notes of the researcher to re-present the College Bound experience at Boston College. The sources of information generated by students included surveys, interviews, and focus groups and by utilizing the student voice more prominently, I hope to offer a more authentic view of the College Bound Program. As a result, this view should assist future students as well as College Bound
organizers. The student voice has not generally been sought out, and I wanted to ensure that student voices were a major information source in this project. To recap, a brief overview of the College Bound Program is described and will be followed by data analysis.

**The College Bound Program.** For more than two decades the College Bound (CB) Program at Boston College has been successful in providing much social capital in the form of college knowledge for urban students from two Boston Public Schools, Brighton High School and West Roxbury Education Complex (formerly West Roxbury High School). College Bound succeeds by utilizing many elements often found in a college preparation program (Gandara, 2001; Perna, 2002). These elements include the physical setting of the Boston College campus, enlisting the participation of current BC undergraduates as mentors, providing academic enrichment classes, organizing SAT prep sessions, holding community meetings, scheduling guest speakers, arranging presentations by Boston College admissions and financial aid specialists, booking field trips to other colleges and museums, and highlighting student achievement.

The College Bound Program describes itself as a “school/university academic enrichment and support program that benefits urban high school students from two of the Boston Public schools—namely Brighton and West Roxbury (since changed to West Roxbury Education Complex) High Schools. . . Established in 1987, the Program is built upon the themes of shared expectations, commitment, and responsibility of students, high schools, families, Boston College and others” (College Bound Program, 2003).

During the twenty years of its existence, College Bound has been committed to improving itself by administering surveys to participating students and trying to adjust its
programmatic offerings to reflect students’ shifting needs. College Bound Program has not been able to keep systematic contacts with students who have graduated from high school and moved on to college (Ladd, 2010a).

The College Bound Program’s success rate of helping participating students gain entrance to four-year colleges is well documented by the College Bound Program. One document from the College Bound office reports that “graduating College Bound students have earned a total of $15.5 million in financial support for higher education since the Program’s inception” (College Bound Program, 2003). Nearly all of the students who attend College Bound for all three years are accepted to four-year colleges, and in some years each participating student is accepted at a four-year college (College Bound Program, 2003).

**Data Analysis.** In chapter three, the following data sources were described—a paper and pencil survey, one-on-one interviews, and focus group sessions (group interviews), the researcher’s observations and field notes, and College Bound documents. The first three sources of data included collecting the words (written and spoken) of participating students. Each data source will be analyzed sequentially before summarizing the major findings.

**Survey.** A survey contributes much to data generation because a large amount of information can be collected over a short period of time. The data from the survey helps to standardize information for further analysis. The survey remained anonymous in hopes that students will be frank in their responses and suggestions (Robson, 2002). A semi-structured survey was used because the researcher was unable to anticipate possible
responses from students and could not predict the range of potential answers students might offer (Morse, 1992). Open-ended responses allow students more freedom to respond and gave the researcher more follow-up opportunities for the focus group and interview process (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006).

**Preliminary Survey and Focus Group.** In 2003, the Acting Director of the College Bound Program granted permission to the researcher to conduct an anonymous senior student survey and preliminary focus group discussion with seniors who would graduate from College Bound and their respective high schools in June, 2003. I administered a survey to approximately ten seniors and conducted a focus group with four seniors in April and May of 2003. Through the survey results and focus group session I sought to explore potential avenues for inquiry for the student voice in the College Bound Program.

**Selection.** In the spring of 2007, students were informed at one of the College Bound meetings that at the next meeting a paper and pencil survey will be administered to anyone willing to complete it. The anonymous semi-structured survey was administered to these 29 (of 60) participating students (48%) in the College Bound Program during the spring of 2007. The survey took approximately 20-30 minutes to complete and was administered by the researcher. The semi-structured survey included a mix of close-ended and open-ended questions. The participating students included eleven (11) sophomore, thirteen (13) junior, and five (5) senior students. The survey contained objective and Likert Scale questions, as well as open-ended responses.

The open-ended responses provided students with an opportunity to write about what they believe they are learning at College Bound. The survey also provided space where any participating student, from all three grades, could offer suggestions for
improving the College Bound Program. The surveys were color-coded, using three
different paper colors, one for each grade. In this way the researcher could easily discern
the senior responses from those of sophomores and juniors. A sample copy of the survey
is included in Appendix A.

Survey Results.

COLLEGE BOUND AT BOSTON COLLEGE
STUDENT SURVEY
2006-2007

RESULTS

General Information

A1. What grade are you in high school? 10th (n= 11) 11th (n=13) 12th (n=5)

A2. Are you? Male 11 Female 18

A3. My ethnic/racial background is (please check all that apply)

Asian American 4 African American 7 Hispanic American 12
Native American 0 White 1 Other 5

A4. Please check the highest level of education received by your parents or guardian:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Guardian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Diploma</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Degree (Ph.D., MD, JD)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A5. How many years (including this year) have you attended the College Bound
Program at Boston College? 1 yr = 15 2 yrs = 9 3 yrs = 5
Note: Some junior students began attending the College Bound Program in their junior year. As a result, those juniors would have answered 1 year (not 2 years) as a participating student.

A6. Will you be the first in your family to attend college? Yes 5 No 24

A7. Do you have an older brother or sister who is currently enrolled in college or has completed a college degree? Yes 16 No 13

A8. In my high school courses, the grades I receive are mostly:

\[(A's = 6) (A's/B's = 14) (B's = 3)(B's/C's = 5) (C's = 0)(C's/ D's =1)\]

A9. How did you find out initially about the College Bound Program at Boston College?

Teacher at school 11
Older sibling 7
Guidance counselor 6
Friends 4
Headmaster/Asst Headmaster 3
College Bound representative who came to school 3

Note: Some students listed more than one person who informed them about College Bound.

College Bound Activities

B1. Below is a list of activities in the College Bound Program. Please rank on a scale from 1 to 4—the activity’s interest for you. Add other activities that you thought were relevant and/or interesting

1= not interesting at all
2= somewhat interesting
3= interesting
4= very interesting
NA= not applicable to me

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>SRS</th>
<th>JRS</th>
<th>SOPH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) community speaker(s)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) academic classes</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) BC student mentor activities</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
d) Recreation time at indoor athletic facility  3.8  3.2  3.2

e) BC admissions information  3.4  3.5  2.8

f) BC financial aid workshop  3.4  3.8  3.3

g) field trip to:  Project Adventure

h) other  College campus field trips

i) other  Museum field trips

B2. List three (3) specific activities you have experienced at College Bound THIS OR LAST YEAR that you believe helped you with the college knowledge process:

Seniors’ comments (n=5):

  Attending College Bound at the Boston College campus.

  Field trip to other colleges

  Financial aid workshop

  Discussion with mentors

  Talking with College Bound advisors/teachers

  Project Adventure trip

Juniors’ comments (n=13):

  Advisory class with College Bound instructor (specifically with Carleton)

  Stonehill College field trip

  SAT Prep classes

  Mentor activities

  Project Adventure trip

  Essay preparation
Academic classes

Study techniques

Holiday celebration

**Sophomores’ comments (n=11):**

Academic classes (math, English)

Advisory class with College Bound instructor

Looking for colleges that will be a good fit for me

Project Adventure trip

Art class

Financial aid information

Expectations via class syllabus

Holiday celebration

Writing exercises and work sheets

The following survey question asked students to complete a sentence.

**Please respond to the prompt:**

Q1. I would (29) would not (0) (check one) recommend the College Bound Program at Boston College to my younger brother or sister (if I had one) because

**Representative students comments:**

**Seniors**

1. It helps you learn about college life (senior).

2. A great opportunity to experience what a college (campus) feels like (senior).

3. Good opportunity for everyone to come and get the knowledge about college (senior).
Juniors

4. The program gives you a good look at what you might be getting into in terms of college (junior).

5. It is a good experience of what colleges are like. It helps prepare you for SATs, MCAS, etc. and for your future college (junior).

6. They would enjoy community meetings and advisory meetings (junior).

7. It teaches you to be responsible and it helps you to think about your future as well (junior).

8. I believe it is never too early to start preparing for college. A program such as this one is great to be involved in because it gives you extra help in the college process (junior).

9. You get to hang out with college mentors and learn more about tougher subjects (junior).

Sophomores

10. I want my brother or sister to have the same opportunities that I had (sophomore).

11. Because it really helps your grades in school with all this extra practice (sophomore).

12. You can learn new things about college from students who are already there (sophomore).

13. It is a cool program that has many types of activities (sophomore).

14. They will not waste their Saturdays (sophomore).

Q2. Three college knowledge ideas I have learned at College Bound Program include:

   What majors are available in college

   Time management

   Financial aid

   Mentor advice
College assignments

SAT scores and the necessity of getting a good score on the test

College is not easy

College is expensive

How to look for a college

To be responsible

Q3. Three activities or ideas I would like to add to the College Bound Program include:

More field trips

SAT Prep time (especially mentioned by juniors)

Visits to other colleges

Provide more time with mentors

Guest speakers from different professions

Art/music classes

Mixed classes with junior and senior students (sophomore comment)

Keep in contact with us when we go to college

More science lab classes

Have College Bound participation earn credit for college

Q4. Three of the problems that should be fixed at College Bound are

The College Bound schedule should be more regular (e.g. gaps between Saturday sessions are too long)

SAT Prep should be longer and lead up to the test date (multiple juniors made this comment)

Visit more colleges
Mentors should attend more often.

Create a theme for the year so students know what to expect (senior comment)

Mixed classes with junior and senior students (sophomore comment)

Make sure busses are on time in the morning

Q5. I would like to return as a guest speaker to the College Bound Program at some point in the future.  yes (19)  no (8)  or  maybe (2)

Why? Or why not?

**Freewrite** (from the survey)

This last page is for you to write anything related to the College Bound Program that you feel would be useful to future students or College Bound Program organizers.

**Options Include (but are not limited to):**

You could suggest ideas that were not mentioned at all.

You could address any question already asked that you feel you want to write about in greater detail.

**Student Responses**

**Results:** 5 of 5 (100%) seniors responded to the Freewrite:

*I think College Bound should give students with a lower G.P.A. an opportunity to prove themselves as smart, young individuals (senior 1).*

*This Program (College Bound) is very educational, but it is limited to only two schools. If you can include more schools or if we can offer individuals to joining, like family members or friends, it would be a great help (senior 2).*

*My ideas for College Bound would be harder classes, and I know when students take that class they will get somewhat frustrated, but they will learn something. If the next week they go to their class at school and a similar situation rises, they will be better prepared and they will realize they actually did learn something (senior 3).*

*The mentor program should be changed so that the mentor and student can have a better relationship (senior 4).*
The mentor program should be more cared for in the way they should be dependable in being our mentors (senior 5).

Results: 11 of 13 (86%) juniors responded to the Freewrite:

I believe that CB is a very good program and it’s a great way to approach the college preparation process (junior 1).

The lunch cards sometimes don’t work so I have to pay for my lunch. Where are the seniors? How come seniors are like never around (segregated) from us 10th-11th graders? Maybe these seniors should be somewhat involved with us (junior 2).

FREE LUNCH! Please (junior 3).

I think the SAT program should have been for a longer period of time. Maybe have ended closer towards the time when we actually take the SAT test in spring (junior 4).

I personally feel that the SAT prep should run year-long for the junior class. I felt that it was too short, and given too early in the year for us juniors to really take advantage of it (junior 5).

College Bound should start at maybe 10 or 11 a.m. because waking up at 7 a.m. is very hard for most students and classes should be 45 minutes long. It makes it (taking classes) more interesting and you could add more courses that way (junior 6).

You guys should concentrate more in essay writing since it tends to be a field that needs a lot of help. Also you should give students more experiences in what college is like and what students are going to be going through (junior 7).

Junior year you should have a class where all you do is write your college essay. This would be very helpful to get the essay done in junior year and a teacher to help you with it (junior 8).

When I was a sophomore College Bound was very interesting and cool. Junior year it’s boring. I would like to see more field trips next year. And I would like our senior class to have fun (junior 9).

We should have more essay practice. Colleges look at essays and we don’t practice much of them. The SAT class should be in spring (junior 10).

The experience has given me an insightful look at one of the best colleges in Massachusetts, knowledge of college courses, recreation, and college preparatory program. Although BC is not for me it has made my desire to look for other colleges.
that much stronger. I wish that by attending this program they could upgrade the classes to a little more college level and maybe give us 2 or 3 college credits afterwards (junior 11).

**Results:** 3 of 11 (27%) sophomores responded to the Freewrite:

*I suggest more things involving a choice. You can choose what you want. Not have to. And Art. Definitely keep that. I think there should be some kind of music thing involved with this College Bound. Also, no reading assignment in the summer. I don’t have time for that. I got other books to read. That I actually like. And that’s it. Oh, and that ropes course (Project Adventure). It should be for everyone, not just 10th graders (sophomore 1).*

*I think CB is good. I can be confident to tell people that I go to College Bound Program during the school year when they ask what I often do on Saturday. Pride (sophomore 2).*

*Woohoo College Bound! (sophomore 3).*

**Survey analysis.**

The first part of the survey asked for demographic and academic information. Students reported their grade level, ethnic background, the level of education of their parents, and their number of years attending College Bound (questions A1-A5). From the results we can observe that some students will not be the first in their family to attend college, but that the majority of students do not have a parent that graduated from college.

The next questions asked students about their family members’ connections to college (A6-A7) and the student’s current academic performance in high school (A8). Responses confirm that many students (24 of 29) will not be the first in their family to attend college. From responses to question A4 we can we observe that a minority of students have a parent who attended college (10 of 29 = 34%). Eleven students answered
that their mother has some college education or has received a college diploma, while 10 fathers have at least some college in their background. From question A7 we observe that 16 of 29 students (55%) have an older brother or sister who attends college, and, as a result, the participating student will not be the first in their family to attend college. The significance of this figure tells us that family members are, very likely, one source of social capital and that older siblings are a trusted connection for information about the “foreign” world of college. This is underscored by responses to A9. It is also worth noting that older siblings were the second most frequent source mentioned about how students found out about College Bound.

Responses to Question A8 reveal that most students are Honor Roll students as 23 of 29 students receive A’s or B’s in their high school courses. Responses to question A9 are significant in that student responses reveal how important classroom teachers are for many of these students. When asked how students initially found out about the existence of the College Bound Program, the largest single source was a classroom teacher.

Teachers, guidance counselors and school administrators account for 58% of the information sources from whom students initially heard about College Bound. High school faculty members must realize that much social capital is built via these school relationships and teachers cannot underestimate their major influence as they act as an important source of social capital to low socio-economic students (Freeman 2005; Orfield 1992; Savitz Romer; 2004). According to Stanton-Salazar (1997), potential school based social capital is actualized when staff members’ shared resources and higher expectations lead to their students’ advancement in the educational system. Farmer-Hinton (2008) informs us that school personnel must supplement those family and local
networks with limited college experience. By teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors at Brighton and West Roxbury publicizing and recommending students to the College Bound Program, they fulfill their role as providers of social capital. Chart 4.1 on the next page illustrates “How students found out about College Bound.”
The above chart illustrates the important role school staff members fulfill by informing students about, and/or suggesting that students should attend College Bound. Teachers, guidance counselors and school administrators account for 58% of the information sources from whom students initially heard about College Bound. Much social capital is built via these school relationships and teachers cannot underestimate their importance as a source of social capital for low-SES students (Freeman 2005; Savitz Romer 2004; Orfield 1992). This relationship between teacher and student communicates to the student that someone cares about his/her future. For many low SES students, this caring relationship with a teacher can make a significant difference.
We now turn to that part of the survey (B1-B2) that asked students to comment on programmatic components that students experience at College Bound.

Question B1 asked students to report on a scale of 1 (not interesting) to 4 (very interesting), and senior students generally gave higher ratings to the first six items listed. Those six items were a) community speakers; b) academic classes; c) BC student mentor activities; d) recreation time at BC athletic facilities; e) BC admissions information; and f) BC financial aid workshop.

College Bound programmatic and schedule changes during 2006-2007 provided students more academic class time and fewer community meetings. This could account for the lower scores given by sophomores and juniors for community speakers and academic classes (a and b). It appears that juniors, in particular, experienced a more difficult mentor relationship (c) during this year. All three groups appeared to enjoy their time at the recreation center (d). Sophomores may not have focused on admissions to Boston College or may not have been present during the session when the BC admissions representatives spoke (e). All students seem to have listened during the financial aid workshop and received much good information (f).

When students commented on field trips (g,h,i), all three classes were positive and many students stated they would like to have more field trips in the future. The field trip to Project Adventure (“ropes course”, team building, outdoor activities, etc.) was mentioned as a highlight by many students from all three classes. Students mentioned other field trips to colleges (Stonehill, Holy Cross, Bentley) as positive experiences at College Bound. Students also mentioned field trips to museums (Institute of
Contemporary Art, The Science Museum, and Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum) as positive experiences.

Other activities were listed under B2. The comments are listed via frequency mentioned, with the items at the top of the list mentioned more than items at the bottom of the list. Note that all three classes mentioned the Project Adventure trip. The junior class is the only group that specifically referenced the SAT prep classes. Both the Project Adventure and SAT Prep ideas will be explored in greater detail in the interviews.

Question 1 (Q1) was unanimous in that all (29) students would recommend College Bound to their younger siblings.

Question 2 (Q2) asked students directly what they have learned at College Bound. This is one of the essential questions of the study. Student comments are very astute about the intent of the College Bound experience, and educators should realize that participating students (at College Bound and in their schools) know much about what is going on.

Question 3 (Q3) asks students to be creative in what they want to add to the College Bound Program.

Question 4 (Q4) inquires students to address the problems they experience and offer suggestions about how to fix them. It is evident from the first response that the irregular schedule was a problem for many students during 2006-2007. In addition, the junior students emphasized their need for more timely preparation for the SAT test in the spring.

Question 5 (Q5). Most students who answered “no” or “maybe” to this question claimed to be shy public speakers and their responses were not due to a negative opinion
of the College Bound Program. This is evident when we consider Q1 above that all 29 students who took the survey would recommend the College Bound Program to a younger sibling. Most juniors or seniors (19 of 29) responded enthusiastically about their willingness to speak to future students at College Bound. Each of the five seniors was eager to return to speak to future College Bound students, perhaps because their own experience of guest speakers at community meetings during their sophomore and junior year were more positive.

The last page of the survey was an open-ended “Freewrite”, a chance for students to write whatever they wanted about the College Bound Program. The CB mentor program may have been uneven during this year (2006-2007) due to schedule changes in College Bound. Of course some undergraduate mentors may have been indifferent this year as well. The comments support the view that the Mentor Program is an important component and that participating students appreciate talking with current college students.

Three of eleven juniors specifically mention that SAT preparation should be more timely, while four of eleven commented on the need to improve essay writing for college. It appears that juniors recognize that they have to improve their SAT scores significantly and an earlier and more intense SAT preparation could possibly begin during the first, or sophomore year, at CB. Students may have a better chance to improve their test scores by working at SAT prep over a two year period with CB teachers/tutors. These comments illustrate that students are learning more about college knowledge as participants in College Bound. I believe fewer sophomore students (27%) responded to the Freewrite due to lack of experience and/or confidence in what they had to say.
Sophomores’ relatively brief experience (1 year) in College Bound gave them less to offer, unless asked a specific question to which they could respond.

A survey has its place as one method of data collection, but is most valuable when used in tandem with other methods (Gillham, 2000). The following sections will include data interpretation from two other methods of student generated data—individual interviews and focus groups.

**Individual semi-structured interviews.** Interviews occurred during the spring of 2007. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather detailed information about what individual students say they are learning in the College Bound Program. The purpose of an interview is to understand other peoples’ experience and the meaning they make of that experience (Seidman 1998). Semi-structured interviews encourage the exploration of topics, because the exact wording cannot be pre-determined (Merriam, 2001). Interviews were conducted not only to generate more detailed and individual data, but also to act as another source of information to assure triangulation. Triangulation helps to assure that the data is not one dimensional and interviews act as a second source to establish credibility of data (Strauss, 1987).

**Selection.** Students were selected purposefully from the group that attended on a scheduled Saturday morning College Bound session during one of the spring CB meetings in 2007. Students were informed that they had to complete and sign a form that included a parental signature as well. Students who volunteered were compensated with two movie tickets to a local theater in Boston.
Twelve students volunteered, eight (8) seniors and three (3) juniors, and one (1) sophomore. Of the twelve who volunteered for the interviews, the gender ratio approximately reflected that of the College Bound Program as a whole. Eight (8) volunteers were female and four (4) were males. This proportion of 2:1 female to male was also the approximate proportion of the students who participate in College Bound. Eleven of the twelve students interviewed had participated in College Bound for more than two years—eight (4 female, 4 males) were seniors about to graduate, and four (4 female) were undergraduates. The seniors were interviewed on the Boston College campus during one of their final two sessions of College Bound, while the juniors were all interviewed on a school day at the West Roxbury Learning Complex in late May, 2007.

Having been exposed to more facets of the Program over a longer period of time, and within weeks of graduating from College Bound and their own high schools, the seniors (four female, four male) were more confident and detailed in their responses. However, the four undergraduates (all female) were also very articulate about what they were learning and suggested a few good ideas for improvement. In particular, two of four junior students specifically suggested offering more timely preparation for the SAT test in the spring. Many juniors also referred to SAT preparation in the paper and pencil survey, thus confirming this idea via data triangulation.

The seniors did, in fact, have more to say about the College Bound Program than the juniors. It is important, however, to ensure that younger students have their voice heard as well. Younger students in College Bound may say something very relevant that can be changed quickly enough to benefit their peers before the next school year. For
example, had I only interviewed senior students (my original intent), I may never have heard about the time sensitive SAT preparation because most second semester seniors are already thinking about going to college in September and they likely have their SAT concerns well behind them. This fact underscores the importance of listening to a wide range of student voices for what they can contribute.

**Data Collection. Individual Interviews.** The researcher set up a tape recorder and two comfortable chairs, whereby each of the twelve interviewees could feel relaxed and comfortable during an interview that lasted from 10 to 15 minutes each. By providing a comfort zone, I hoped that my recognition (as a former volunteer and tutor in the College Bound Program) by the students would put them at ease and make it more likely that they would enter a conversation to offer their individual perspective (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). Occasionally, in the earlier interviews, I did feel that I was offering my some of my own comments on the College Bound Program. As the interviews progressed, it was the students’ comments and suggestions that carried the real weight in the interview. I did not sense any holding back or extreme shyness during the interview itself, nor did I pick up any verbal signals during the numerous playbacks of the actual tape recording. At the end of these interviews, I did feel that the students had given their own new meaning to the questions I had asked each of them.

Concern is often expressed by the inherent unequal power relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (Merriam, 2001), but I do feel that my role as a participant/observer/teacher in College Bound for four years actually helped to mitigate the unequal power differential. The researcher was familiar to many of the students in the program as a teacher/chaperone. My visibility to the students on many Saturday
mornings helped them understand that I would be able to comprehend what they were talking about.

Before I began to tape the interview, I reminded each student that this process was meant to help those following them at College Bound and that they need not feel any pressure to say the “right” thing. This idea was also part of the letter they received weeks earlier inviting them to participate in the interview process. Students were informed that their ideas are the focus of this study, and to be as open and frank as they can be. I believe that is the result from recorded interviews.

**Interview procedure.** Each student was interviewed individually at the Boston College campus or at the West Roxbury Learning Complex. All the seniors (8) were interviewed at the Boston College Campus over two Saturday sessions in May of 2007, while all undergraduate students (4) were interviewed at their school (West Roxbury Learning Complex) late in May, 2007. All interviews were conducted and audio-taped by the researcher. A professional transcription service transcribed all interviews. After the transcription was completed, the researcher analyzed and coded the interview data for each individual.

The two generative questions that are the focus of this study are:

1. What students say they are learning at College Bound
2. What suggestions do you have for improving CB for future students.

Responses to each question will be explored and analyzed in Chapter 5.

On the following two pages are charts summarizing what the twelve interviewed students say they are learning in College Bound (4.2) and suggestions to improve the College Bound Program (4.3).
### Chart 4.2  What I am Learning at College Bound (Twelve Individual Interviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>time management</th>
<th>maturity and leadership</th>
<th>improved college selection</th>
<th>to work in groups</th>
<th>atmosphere of college campus</th>
<th>SAT Prep</th>
<th>financial aid info</th>
<th>financial aid info</th>
<th>good info from mentors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Regular Schedule</td>
<td>More Help in Class</td>
<td>Improve Mentor Program</td>
<td>More Field Trips</td>
<td>More Students</td>
<td>SAT Preparing</td>
<td>Community Meetings</td>
<td>Guest Speakers</td>
<td>Help of BC campus</td>
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Focus Groups. Focus groups are group interviews that can elicit much information very efficiently (Creswell, 2008). Focus groups provide data that are closer to the emic ( insider) view because they allow individuals to respond in their own words. They can be used as an exploratory tool that defines issues and concerns to be researched. Focus groups can also function as a confirmatory tool to establish a possible hypothesis (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). In this research project, focus groups were used in both ways, as exploratory and confirmatory.

When this research project was in its embryonic stages, I was able to speak with a few graduating seniors in the spring of 2003. I asked a few seniors what they liked and disliked about the College Bound Program now that they were about to graduate. It was in this focus group that I initially heard about the high cost of lunch at the Boston College campus. This comment surprised me because it had little to do with the curriculum of College Bound, where my assignment placed me. The comment forced me to reflect on other aspects of the College Bound Program that I had not thought about, but that students obviously had.

I moderated and audiotaped each of the three focus groups. Each focus group included four students and the session met for approximately 20 to 30 minutes. I listened to the tapes many times. The audiotapes were professionally transcribed after which and I coded and analyzed the text.

Selection. All students who were interviewed individually were also part of a focus group. With eight females and four males as the number of interviewees, I was able to arrange one focus group of all senior females and another of three juniors and one sophomore. The third focus group consisted of four senior males.
Analysis of three focus groups. Each focus group confirmed much of the information generated in the survey and the individual interviews. The confirmation acted as an added emphasis to what had been stated earlier in some of the individual interviews.

Focus Group #1. This group of four senior females reiterated that College Bound provided them with the knowledge and time to organize a more personal and focused college search. Three of the four females also emphasized that they learned time management skills and self-discipline by their participation in College Bound for three years. The third item mentioned by the senior female students was the cost of college and how to understand the financial aid process.

Suggestions for improvement included a more stable schedule by meeting more regularly every other week and to ensure that mentors are present during the College Bound lunch times. These two factors may have been connected—mentors also may have been impacted negatively by an irregular schedule of Saturdays. Very significantly, the senior females would have liked to continue the community meetings that, in former years, had been the first event to occur on Saturday mornings. These three suggestions confirm many of the suggestions that were offered during the individual interviews.

Focus Group #2. Four senior males comprised the second focus group. One of the four students dominated this focus group, and the others agreed with some, but not all, of his ideas. As the moderator I attempted to steer some of the written questions to the other students, but had little success. This group believed that they learned about commitment to education, and enjoyed the mentor experience very much. They also strongly agreed that Saturday was the absolutely best day to schedule College Bound classes. Favorite experiences included field trips and meeting the teachers at College Bound.
One suggestion for improvement included offering more challenging academic classes. These classes should not include homework, but contain more challenging concepts presented in class. The other two suggestions for improvement referred to 1) expanding College Bound to more “non-qualifying” students, and 2) allowing students from more Boston Public high schools to attend College Bound.

Allowing non-qualifying students a chance to attend did not resonate with three of the members of the focus group, but all seem to agree that CB should open its doors to other students from the Boston Public Schools, beyond Brighton and West Roxbury. All suggestions underscore how valuable the students understand the College Bound Program to be, and they want to ensure that other students have similar opportunities.

**Focus Group #3.** The three juniors and one sophomore were not yet fully engaged in searches for specific colleges, and they suggested more college visits in the fall of their senior year. One good suggestion offered was to poll juniors at the end of their junior year and ask them what colleges they would like to visit in the fall with College Bound.

Another relevant suggestion emphasized by all three juniors was to schedule SAT prep classes to coincide with the SAT test date for juniors in the spring. This particular year juniors were given SAT classes in the fall, but juniors traditionally take the SAT in the spring months.

All four underclassmen spoke highly of the trip to Project Adventure and urged CB to make sure future students have the opportunity for this special field trip. I believe the reason for the high marks for Project Adventure in all data collection instruments (survey, individual interviews, focus groups) was due to the experiential, hands-on nature of the trip. Although CB staff accompanied students on this trip, Project Adventure had
an expert staff that took over as soon as students stepped off the bus. Project Adventure included lots of team building exercises, physical challenges to self, and learning to trust others. All challenges were doable and students encouraged each other to take reasonable chances.

The fact that students were outdoors, far from any school or classroom setting, and enjoying the camaraderie of the group during an invigorating field trip gave students something new and unique to experience. It is no wonder that nearly all students referenced Project Adventure as one of their favorite experiences in College Bound.

**Summary of Focus Groups.** The more informal focus group of 2003 played a significant exploratory role as I was just beginning to formulate a research focus. All three focus groups in 2007 acted as amplifiers to ideas that had been mentioned in the surveys and individual interviews. In this way the focus groups of 2007 served as confirmatory tools for the data analysis. Due to the emic nature of the previous two instruments for data collection (the survey and individual interviews), all three focus groups did confirm much previous data collected in earlier phases of the research.

In order to conclude the data analysis for this research, it is essential to explore the etic sources, those “outside” sources that will be used to triangulate the data from the students’ emic voices. We will now turn to field notes and observations.

**Field notes and observations.** The researcher was an active staff participant in the College Bound Program from 2002 to 2006. In two of those years I was a paid assistant and other years I served as a volunteer. At all times during the research, participating CB students were aware that I was a familiar face on Saturdays. At various times I was a classroom teacher on College Bound Saturdays, an interested observer in other CB
staffed classrooms and community meetings on Saturday mornings, and an occasional chaperone on field trips. I also attended the holiday celebrations and graduation ceremonies for three of those years. I was also fortunate to get an invitation to the twentieth anniversary celebration in May, 2008, which I also attended. My observations and field notes cover many of these experiences.

**Classroom Teacher.** Whether teaching sophomores, juniors, or seniors, all students I encountered were cooperative, polite, and eager to learn. My teaching assignments were usually in O’Neil Library or in a computer lab on campus. (See Appendix D for Saturday schedules that include my name and which class I was scheduled to teach that day).

As I demonstrated the use of a microfiche reader in O’Neil Library, or how to find valuable information about cars on the internet, students were quick to learn and eager to complete the assignment. Almost all assignments I created were useful beyond the Saturday sessions and I tried to make them personally meaningful to each student. In addition, I often utilized the time given to me to ensure that students could complete the work before our time expired on that day.

For example, one assignment in the library microfiche room was designed for students to locate a primary source of a significant historical event from the *New York Times*. I gave each student a unique event to research such as the sinking of the *Titanic* (1912) or the dropping of the atomic bomb (1945). The movie *Titanic* had been recently released and I also discovered that students were studying World War II in their history classes. In all cases students diligently proceeded to learn how to utilize the microfiche reader, print out the relevant page, and hand it to me before the end of the day. I also
made sure they were able to take a copy home with them for potential use in school during the week.

One memorable assignment came from a student who voiced an independent request during a class in fall, 2004, that I was happy to grant. A sophomore student asked if he could research Cuba in the microfiche copies of the *New York Times*. He told me his father had emigrated from Cuba many years earlier and the student was eager to discover more about Cuba during the time his father grew up there. I remember the expression on the student’s face when he printed out the *New York Times* front page headline about Castro’s victory in Cuba in 1959. This date (1959) was probably thirty years before the student was born, yet his excitement was palpable to me and other students present. I often gave the same opportunity to all students in the class to suggest an historical event in which they were personally interested.

I believe the student’s eagerness about seeing this headline and printing a copy to take home had little to do with Castro, and much to do about demonstrating to his father that this student was learning some history about his father’s childhood. This experience reminded me of Freire’s comments that students are seldom allowed to ask questions in their education and that I was helping this student ask an important question (Freire and Faundez, 1989). I believe this student exercised a personal interest that affected his educational growth in a positive manner, and I hope that he was given opportunities to ask questions in the future.

I designed other classroom experiences to elicit students’ voices and knowledge about the world around them, including their use of the internet sources. One assignment involved individual students who would research and present one broadly “educational”
website that they would recommend to their classmates by presenting and explaining the website. I would then compile a list of websites for the benefit of the class. I recall the wide range of interests these students covered as they presented their results. Selected websites included music knowledge, information about purchasing cars, and a website about information on scholarships students might seek. I believe by giving these students a personal choice of topic (favorite website), it helped to encourage them to approach the assignment more diligently.

In most of my classroom teaching experiences I recall students ready to learn and eager to complete assignments during our Saturday sessions. Both examples of assignments given here have tried to underscore how much I have included some aspect of student voice in the creation and completion of the assignment.

**Art Class.** Occasionally I attended classes with a group of students when I had not been assigned to teach a class myself. I usually would ask students which classes were their favorites. Students attending the art class (offered in 2005-2006) were very interested in learning how to draw. The art instructor, a recent graduate of Boston College, made sketching and drawing skills enjoyable and interesting. He was encouraging and open with all students. He demonstrated a particular technique and then moved around the art studio classroom to observe students as they attempted to draw an object he had placed in the middle of the room. Students realized that this “fun” class was also a challenge to learn a new skill. Not only did students eagerly embrace this opportunity, but during interviews students also suggested that more elective choices be created in the future for College Bound students.
**SAT Prep class.** In another class, students were put through the paces to review the SAT exam in math. The instructor was very good at reviewing questions from the practice book, calling on students to proceed to the front of the room and explain their answer to the class. The instructor was always supportive and made sure students knew the math concept by reviewing and giving sample problems that covered the same topics as the questions under review in the sample SAT book.

Students were eager to learn the SAT material because they were aware that their SAT scores were generally lower than the national average and they wanted to improve their scores. This course was a good example of a course that was necessary and helpful to participating CB students. Recent research indicates that students from low-SES backgrounds understand the importance of the SAT and ACT tests, and want to learn how to improve their results (Deil-Amen & Tevis, 2010).

Scheduling this class also illustrates the knowledge that CB organizers bring to the programming of the CB schedule. While junior students who sat through these classes were thankful that the course was offered, three of the juniors interviewed mentioned that the course would have been more beneficial for them had it been scheduled in the spring semester leading into the SAT test in the spring. The focus group formed with these same junior students served to triangulate this idea and also reminded me that the SAT prep course is definitely worthwhile, and would be helpful if it were scheduled in the spring semester for junior students.

In all classes that I attended over a three year period, students were attentive, inquisitive, and respectful of the teachers trying to convey meaning on the “sixth day” of school for all these students.
Community Meetings. From 2002 to 2005, the entire College Bound community (sophomores, juniors, and seniors) attended the community meetings as the first scheduled event each Saturday. As an audience member for many of these Saturday mornings, I looked forward, not only to hearing the guest speaker’s message, but also to the question and answer period between students and the speaker.

Guest speakers included Boston College professors and graduate students, professors from other universities, local business entrepreneurs, CB alumni, and Boston College admissions and financial aid staffers. Students were attentive for this morning “kick-off” session as the guest usually spoke for approximately fifteen to twenty minutes and left ample time for questions from the audience. Student questions were thoughtful and respectful and the exchange appeared to launch students into a good frame of mind to proceed to their first scheduled class of the day.

The community meetings provided a common social/academic experience for all students simultaneously. To observe all CB students present in the same lecture hall, hearing one message, and responding with questions to the presenter, gave me the sense that this was a unique learning opportunity that CB organizers planned well. CB planners took the time to secure guest speakers and have them speak on a topic that these students would find interesting.

Many students appeared to enjoy the community meetings with all three classes. It is no coincidence that as community meetings became less frequent during 2006-2007, some students felt more isolated from the other students in the Program. The community meetings may have been less frequent because the seniors were not required to attend every meeting in the spring semester, or CB could not guarantee/confirm a sufficient
number of guest speakers at that point in the school year. In the student generated data sources (surveys, interviews, focus groups), more than one student suggested having more College Bound events with all three classes together.

Many students comprehend that a more frequent scheduling of mixed age (sophomores, juniors, seniors) activities and learning opportunities will produce a more unified experience in College Bound. Much academic research recognizes that successful college preparation programs have a strong cohort of students at its core (Yamamura et al. 2010). The existence of a cohort encourages students to participate who might otherwise falter if they saw themselves as individuals attending a special program. In turn, this cohort can become a contributor of the social capital necessary to build student confidence to continue onto college (Bergerson 2009).

One perceptive student suggested that CB create a theme for the year that would be common to all three classes. In this way a unified vision might permeate the entire program, and all participating students would feel a common bond across all three grade levels, from beginning sophomores to graduating seniors.

**Field Trip Chaperone.** As a CB teacher I also attended field trips with students as part of my assignment for the day. Two field trips stand out in my experience—one to Project Adventure and the other to Bentley College (now Bentley University).

Project Adventure is a physical and social experience that involves role playing, team building, outdoor activities, and an entertaining group lunch. One goal of the Project Adventure trip was to build teamwork and trust among all participants. The location was @ 30 miles north of Boston and all sophomores went on the trip on a College Bound Saturday in the spring. I believe the organization of the trip was superb
and all students (and this instructor) learned much about themselves and others on the Project Adventure field trip.

Nearly all students responded to the survey and/or the interview that the Project Adventure trip was one of the best remembered experiences in College Bound. Seniors and juniors commented very positively on this trip even though it had occurred one or two years earlier for them.

The reasons for the Project Adventure field trip’s impact are many. First, the bus trip out of the city and into the countryside is a welcome change for most of these inner city residents. Second, familiar faces of CB teachers are bringing students to meet experts in team building and outdoor activities in a new and welcoming environment. Third, all students are challenged to leave their comfort zone and trust others to help out when challenged. As I clearly recall, one activity, “the flying squirrel,” involved each willing team member to be installed in a harness and hoisted off the ground by the entire team using a tree and a pulley system. It was quite a thrill to look down at forty feet to see your fellow students/pupils pulling on a rope that is keeping you aloft.

Other activities that day included teams of students pairing off in games of balance, contests involving team strategies, and an outdoor lunch that turned into a boisterous and fun-filled break. I believe one reason students enjoyed the Project Adventure experience because it was an extraordinary physical and social experience not usually associated with school.

**Bentley University field trip.** Another positive experience for students involved a field trip to Bentley University in Waltham. Students were given a tour of the campus after which they were ushered into a large meeting room that had been set up for a power point
presentation and catered lunch. Lunch was provided by Bentley and an admissions
officer welcomed everyone for the day. At the end of the lunch, students sat quietly
through a presentation about Bentley and asked questions afterwards.

On the bus ride back to the Boston College campus, students were excited about
the Bentley campus and the academic/social picture created by the admissions officer.
Student self-images are bolstered by these field trips and presentations by college staff
members. Participating students seem to understand that the college environment
presents a new and altogether different educational opportunity. One of the most
common suggestions from students in the survey and the interviews was for more field
trips to college campuses.

It is not hard to understand why students would want to experience more college
visits. As I have stated earlier, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to
view college as a foreign country (Pappano, 2003). Field trips to different colleges help
students see the similarities among colleges, as well as the differences between colleges.
By suggesting more field trips to more colleges, students are taking those steps to make
college less foreign and more familiar.

**Holiday celebrations and Graduation (end of year) ceremony.** I attended at least six
of these recognition luncheons over a four year period. The holiday celebration occurred
on the last scheduled Saturday in December, while the graduation ceremony occurred at
the final CB meeting of the school year in May.

Students and their family members were invited to both festive days. At the
holiday meeting a wonderful meal was served by the BC catering department and many
families brought younger brothers and sisters along. These wide-eyed siblings may have
been enjoying their first visit to a college campus. I could not help but feel that social
capital was forming within the family as all participating students, their families, and the
CB staff enjoyed a pleasant pre-holiday meal together.

The Graduation ceremony occurred on the final College Bound Saturday in May.
Lunch was usually served in the majestic Great Hall in Gasson, creating a welcoming and
impressive tone to the proceedings. All seniors were recognized and presented with a
certificate and small gift. Juniors and sophomores were usually given a book or Boston
College souvenir and encouraged to return in September. Many families also attended
the Graduation Saturday and demonstrated a beaming pride in their son’s or daughter’s
accomplishment. As I sat with some of the students and their families on these
occasions, I always wondered what role College Bound played throughout their high
school years. This research was my attempt to answer that question.

**College Bound documents.** The College Bound Program at Boston College has
celebrated more than twenty years in existence. Professor George Ladd of the Boston
College faculty was the original founder in 1987 and he retired as director of the CB
program in 2001-2002. Since his retirement, three other BC faculty have assumed the
Director’s position. Professor John Cawthorne was Acting Director in 2002-2003,

The College Bound Program began in the 1970s when Professor Ladd was asked
by then President, J. Donald Monan to become an informal liaison to the Boston Public
Schools. In the 1980s, Boston College wanted to formalize its relationship with the
Boston Public Schools and Professor Ladd created the College Bound Program in 1987
(Ladd, 2010b). A mentoring component was part of the original conception, and
Professor Ladd asked BC personnel to mentor each participating CB student @ ten hours per week (Heffernan, 2003). The undergraduate mentors grew out of this idea and mentors meet for lunch with CB students on Saturdays.

Professor Ladd strongly believes that College Bound is a shared commitment between the individual student, his/her family, the public school, and the Boston College resources (Ladd, 2010a). This is evident in some of the documents that College Bound has produced over the years.

For example, students were required to sign a contract entitled “Boston Public Schools/Boston College Bound Collaborative” for 2002-2003-2004. The contract described the expectations of the Program for those years. At the bottom of the page of the contract was space for three signatures—the participating student, the parent/guardian, and the high school contact. (See Appendix D for a copy of the CB contract).

College Bound data also included SAT scores for a five year period (1999-2003) for all students at Brighton and West Roxbury High Schools compared to the subset of those students who attended College Bound. Although the SAT scores of participating students were not significantly higher (approximately 10-15% in both math and English), the fact that College Bound continues to offer the SAT prep course demonstrated its commitment to have students strive as much as possible to improve their chances of qualifying for entrance to a four year college.

Near the end of the 2002-2003 school year, a newsletter published by College Bound summarized activities for the year and listed twenty eight students who would attend college in the fall of 2003. The newsletter listed all twenty eight students by name,
and reports that “financial aid in excess of $4.5 million has been awarded from more than 40 different colleges and universities” (College Bound Program, June, 2003).

This edition of the newsletter also described an afternoon field trip to the DeCordova Museum and an end of year message from the mentors to their students in College Bound. The newsletter reminds next year’s students to have a good summer and read two assigned books for the summer months.

**Conclusion.** Student generated data (surveys, interviews, and focus groups) and my observations and field notes combined to create a large part of this case study database. Official College Bound documents and the comments of the Founding Director of the College Bound Program, Professor George Ladd, helped to establish a more complete context of the Program at Boston College. The combination of these emic (inside) and etic (outside) sources served to triangulate the data such that weaknesses of one source were compensated by the strengths of others.

My role as a participant-observer led to many experiences that I was able to describe in this chapter. The fact that I was embedded in the College Bound Program for four years gave me opportunities to reflect and question students as well as CB personnel in that time period. Although my own perceptions are a significant part of this research, I intend for the student voices to carry much weight in the findings in chapter five. By utilizing more than these two sources (student voices and my observations), I hope to strengthen the analysis via triangulation.

Triangulation was evident in two ways—data triangulation and method triangulation (Krathwohl, 1998). Data triangulation of the instruments of student input helped to establish accuracy about the activities and experiences of participating students.
For example, different students commented on their positive experience about the field trip to Project Adventure across three sources of data collection—surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Therefore we can assume that it is accurate to conclude that the Project Adventure trip was a positive experience shared by many participating students.

Method triangulation allows different methods of data collection to assess similar aspects of a particular phenomenon. Sometimes this process can lead to contradictions or questions about that phenomenon (Krathwohl, 1998). A good example of method triangulation fostering a question in this study might be the students’ comments that sometimes the mentor-student relationship was inconsistent, whereas the official documents stated that the mentor-student relationship was an integral and important part of the College Bound Program. The anomaly presented here might lead the College Bound staff to ensure that the mentors are reliable and consistent each year.

The strength of the data gathered and analyzed in this chapter is only as reliable as the researcher’s skill at synthesis. By creating the data collection instruments, analyzing the results, and writing the meaning of what I saw and heard in the College Bound Program, I hope to convey the grounded experience of participating students. Because the researcher is the main instrument of analysis, it is my understanding and written explanations that allow readers to see the rich and holistic framework that forms the College Bound Program at Boston College. My hope is that the transparency of the data sources, the analysis of the data, the reliability of my perceptions, and the rich description of College Bound Program will enable future CB staff members to allow students to proactively contribute suggestions to improve the College Bound Program.

We now turn to the concluding chapter.
Chapter 5

Summary and implications of findings

Students attending College Bound were quite willing and eager to participate in surveys, interviews, and focus groups, in order to offer their ideas and opinions of the College Bound Program at Boston College. Every student in attendance at College Bound on a Saturday in April or May, 2007, was willing to complete the paper and pencil survey when I administered it. If time and resources had permitted, I believe many more students would also have been prepared to participate in one-on-one interviews to discuss their ideas about what they are learning and suggestions for improvement in the CB Program. This eagerness to give their opinion sends a strong signal that students are enthusiastic about telling their story, when given a chance to do so. Educators must recognize that “students do hold well-articulated views about their own learning and school experience and, when given the opportunity, they can and do express their insights and opinions clearly” (Groves and Welsh, 2010).

Student voices and perspectives served as a major component of this research and I discovered 1) students know a lot about what is going on; and, 2) students are not empty vessels when they participate in an educational program, but bring a wide range of their own educational experiences to draw upon (Freire, 1985).

Participating College Bound students shared many good ideas and suggestions to help improve the CB Program, not only for themselves, but also for future students. As Jonathan Kozol reminds us “students are a great deal more reliable in telling us what actually goes on . . . and in the big things children rarely have much reason to mislead us” (Kozol, 2005, p. 12). I found this to be case after reviewing and analyzing surveys and
interviewing participating students in College Bound at Boston College. In sharing their opinions and suggestions, College Bound students were also exercising their rights as nascent democratic citizens, an important element of public schooling that has received scant attention in the era of high stakes testing (Tse, 2000; Boston, 2005).

The themes that emerged from surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups concentrated on the two research questions: 1) What students say they are learning at College Bound, and 2) What suggestions students offer to improve the College Bound Program.

Three of the more prominent ideas expressed by students about what they say they are learning at College Bound included: a) increased responsibility and maturity, including the recognition that students had to learn how to manage their time; b) a more thoughtful and analytical search for colleges; c) the importance of the setting of the College Bound Program on the Boston College campus. Each of these learning experiences will be explored in more detail below.

a) Increased responsibility and maturity, including the recognition that students had to learn how to manage their time. When asked what they think they have learned from attending College Bound, many students responded that they learned how to be more responsible as students—both at Boston College on Saturday and at their own high school during the week. Many of the written surveys and nearly all twelve students interviewed recognized the added layer of expectations that the College Bound Program required. Although none of the students used the term “higher expectations,” the
researcher concluded from students’ responses that the College Bound Program expects students to do more academic work and most students understood this fact.

Furthermore, many interview responses about what students were learning remained consistent between seniors (8) and juniors (4). For example, of the twelve students interviewed, the following five quotes demonstrate consistency about the higher expectations at CB.

**Student 1 (male, senior).** “I’ve learned leadership and dedication to school by waking up on a Saturday to come and learn more.”

**Student 5 (female, senior).** “What I learned that was really good for me was time management. We have homework from CB and we have school homework. So I have to do all of them.” (homework assignments).

**Student 6 (female, senior).** “I’ve learned to be more responsible because on Saturday I’d rather be sleeping, and I have to get up.”

**Student 9 (female, junior).** “I’ve learned responsibility first of all because we do have to wake up early on Saturday morning to go to CB”.

**Student 11 (female, junior).** “I think, to be honest, learning how to manage your school work, plus extracurricular activities.”

These quotes, from five different students from both the senior and junior classes, highlight the extra effort and mature outlook that students understand to be part of the culture at the College Bound Program. These comments help to confirm that the College Bound Program succeeds in its goal “to provide urban students with the skills and motivation to reach their academic potential” (College Bound Welcome Program. 2005-2006).
b) A more thoughtful and analytical search for colleges. Research about attending college has focused on students who progress through three stages—the predisposition to go to college, research on various colleges, and the choice or selection of one college to attend (Hossler 1999). For the most part, predisposition for College Bound students has already been decided. Most have moved past the predisposition phase by attending College Bound. In addition, by meeting on the college campus itself, the idea of attending college permeates each student’s consciousness by the fact that they are present at a college campus on a regular basis.

The next phase in the college planning cycle is the research about which colleges students may want to attend. Seniors who participated in CB for three years have learned much about researching colleges. Participating CB students are introduced to online tools to help search for college admissions criteria, including financial costs. The researcher taught some of the students how to access databases that helped in the college search process.

College Bound organizes field trips to other college campuses such as Stonehill College, Bentley College (now Bentley University), and The College of the Holy Cross. BC admissions and financial aid staff members speak to CB students about the cost of attending college and understanding the process of financial aid. The Boston College Financial Aid Office personnel donates its time on one Saturday in December, January, or February to meet with individual senior students and their parents to review the FAFSA process.

Following are a few sample quotes about how students expanded their college search by attending College Bound:
**Student 1 (male, senior).** Because of CB, I have never heard of Holy Cross (College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA) and since I had a field trip there, I visited the campus. I’ve applied and have been accepted.

**Student 2 (female, senior).** At first when I started the program, I was applying to all these colleges, and I’m like yeah, I’m applying to as many colleges as I can. Then during my senior year here, I’ve kind of narrowed them down, and I noticed I need to look more into the background to these colleges. How much they cost. What can it offer me as a student, especially as a first year student.

**Student 3 (male, senior).** I learned a lot about which colleges I should apply to. What’s the best college for me, especially my major, what I’d like to do.

**Student 7 (female, senior).** Well, one of the major things I learned was about choosing colleges and when we go on campus tours. Look around for things that might interest you and things you might question, and how comfortable you might be in that college setting.

These responses from senior students underscore the critical thinking that these students have experienced to arrive at a more comfortable stage in selecting colleges. Throughout their senior year, many of these students became astute readers of college web sites, asked probing questions of admissions counselors on college visits, and engaged the College Bound staff with more detailed questions about college. Most seniors were confident in their knowledge and ability to navigate the college search process.
The selection phase is a bit more difficult to describe accurately as CB students are often accepted at multiple colleges. Students may inform the CB office at which college (or colleges) they have been accepted to, but a thorough follow-up process has been missing from the College Bound Program to ascertain if, in fact, the student is registered at the selected college by the following September. It is often the case that students themselves are unsure where they will register in the fall after high school graduation, although they have been accepted at one or more colleges. This dilemma is part of a host of social and financial difficulties that beset low SES students whose families may not want to incur debt, or have their child move out of the house to a college campus.

The dilemma is not easily resolved as many low SES students instinctively understand the financial burden college tuition will put on the family. Going to college likely involves spending money the family may not have, leaving childhood friends and neighborhoods and for many low-SES students this shift is indeed a challenging experience.

To help in this difficult decision for students and their families, College Bound could ensure that financial aid information is thoroughly reviewed with students and their parents once students are accepted in the spring of senior year. This review session could be conducted by the BC financial aid specialists or by the guidance counselors at the student’s high school. In this way the student’s family might be able to make a more informed, collective decision about the pathway to take regarding various types of loans and financial aid trade-offs, living home vs. living at college, and a host of other social and financial decisions unique to each family. It is important that these counseling
sessions involve one senior and his/her family so that advice can be customized to that family’s situation. In fact, this counseling session(s) could become the incentive for seniors to attend the College Bound Program for their second semester of senior year.

c) The importance of the setting of the CB program on the BC campus. Many responses on the written survey frequently mentioned the BC campus as an eye opening experience. As one sophomore student responded “it is helpful (coming to a college campus) for people who don’t know a lot about college.” All twelve interviewed students were very clearly attracted by the location of the College Bound Program at the Boston College Campus. Except for one junior student, who indicated she would attend a program at her high school because it was close to her house, all interviewees understood the significance of meeting at the Boston College campus.

As earlier stated, many low income students consider the college campus a foreign country, and by traveling to Boston College to attend College Bound, some of the unknown factors about attending college were significantly reduced. Students became very familiar with the campus over a two or three year period and they learned to find their way around to the dining halls, recreation center, library, and computer labs. Educators at the secondary and college levels should recognize that high school students who have a chance to attend a college campus on a regular basis will feel more confident about the entire college application process. This is largely because what had previously been a foreign world is now a more familiar world.

Following are representative responses to the question “if College Bound were to meet at your high school instead of the Boston College campus, would you attend?”
**Student 1 (senior, male):** I might attend it. I might not, because when you come (to the Boston College campus), the environment helps.

**Student 2 (senior, female):** I would, but then at the same time, I wouldn’t be that excited about it. . . . It’s preparing us in some type of why how to be in a college setting or something like that. So if it’s at a high school, it wouldn’t really work.

**Student 3 (senior, female):** I would but I’d think it would be better at a college campus. You actually see college students here that can give you some feedback on how they’re doing in college.

**Student 4 (senior, male):** Not really. I go to my high school five days a week and I stay there after school most of the time. To have it changed is better for me personally.

**Student 5 (senior, female):** When you come to B.C., it’s like coming to a college campus. So you feel like you’re actually in college. So you learn how college students act versus high school.

**Student 6 (senior, male):** I would go but I wouldn’t be too happy about it. I wouldn’t want to be in school on a Saturday.

**Student 7 (junior, female):** Yeah. I might attend it. But it wouldn’t be the same. It wouldn’t really be about college. It would just be Saturday classes.

We cannot overlook the importance of the Boston College setting for these students. All of these students would be unlikely to attend a similar program in their high school building, and they understand that coming to the college campus itself is one of the main inducements for students to attend the College Bound Program. The social
experience of feeling part of the college atmosphere exerts a beneficial effect for all students who attend on a regular basis.

**Further ideas.** Additional ideas that students say they learned at College Bound included social interaction with mentors, financial cost and financial aid information, and preparation for the SAT.

Mentors were Boston College undergraduates who took time to socialize with College Bound students, mainly meeting for lunch on CB Saturdays. In some years the undergraduate mentors were very active and other years, less so. Students reported that the mentor experience in 2006-2007 was less satisfactory which I attribute to a somewhat irregular schedule of the College Bound sessions throughout the year. Nevertheless, numerous students had many positive comments about the mentors and the fact that they were able to speak to college students only a few years older to find out what “really happens” at college.

Senior students reported that they learned much about college costs and the financial aid process. Boston College admissions and financial aid personnel attend special Saturday meetings to share their knowledge of the FAFSA form and the financial aid process. Students are asked to invite their parents to the special session for a one-on-one advisory. Some students were able to bring a parent to that session.

The financial aid process is an important information gap that must be filled for all low-income students who traditionally have been priced out of the college market (Supiano, 2009). By understanding that the federal government will make it possible to attend college with financial assistance, and that no family should expect to pay the up-front costs for all college expenses, many of these students fears can be reduced.
significantly. The College Bound Program has helped clarify the financial aid picture for students.

Junior students mentioned that they learned about SAT prep at College Bound. However, in learning about SAT prep, juniors also understood that to benefit from that prep, CB teachers should focus on those weeks and months leading directly to the test date. In this particular year (2006-2007), junior students mentioned that the test prep was conducted in the fall for their class, but that the traditional time to take the test for juniors is in the spring months.

**Experiential Learning.** Another important component to the College Bound Program is the set of experiences arranged by administrators to enrich the experience of all students who attend. Students often stated their appreciation for the field trips to other colleges and museums. They commented positively on invitations to campus events such as football games, dance performances, and the BC Arts Festival on campus. These serendipitous (to the students) experiences add to the students’ appreciation and understanding that college life can be simultaneously pleasant and socially interesting while academically challenging.

**Project Adventure.** One of the most positive experiences referred to by nearly all students who attended was the field trip to Project Adventure, a team building exercise that involved all students in physical activity, building group trust, and fun. A vast majority of surveys and nearly all twelve interviewees responded that Project Adventure was one of the top three highlights of their College Bound experience. Because Project Adventure was not a specific “learning experience,” students tended not to list it under what they are learning at College Bound. As someone who chaperoned one of these
trips, I can recall the student excitement during and after this particular field trip to a
North Shore “ropes course’’. It did not surprise me that students remembered this special
trip, even though it had been one or two years earlier for most of them.

**What students say they are learning.** To summarize, participating students said that
they learn many new habits and skills when they attend College Bound at BC. Students
reported that they learn self-awareness, time management, and attain a more serious
commitment to school. Furthermore, seniors reported that their college search process is
deepened and more personalized as a result of attending College Bound. In addition,
participating students learn about contemporary college students’ perspectives from the
BC mentors who have lunch with CB students on a regular basis on Saturdays. Students
discover some of the social habits of the students on a college campus simply by their
physical presence at Boston College two Saturdays per month.

College Bound students also gain self-confidence and are not as intimidated by
the process of applying to college during their senior year. The college going process—
involving the predisposition, research, and selection phases—becomes far more
manageable for the participating students at College Bound. Overall, the higher
expectations that were part of the College Bound ethos contributed to students expecting
more of themselves. With these higher expectations came commensurate support from
College Bound staff, Boston College undergraduate student-mentors, and the cohort of
participating students.

The individual extra effort that students exert at CB is a strong indicator that
students realize they can succeed by utilizing the combination of resources from their
families, their high school, and the CB Program at Boston College. In the process of
attending College Bound for three years, participating students also accrue an increased
amount of social capital that their peers, who did not attend CB or other college
preparation program, may not have obtained (Ladd, 2010b).

What suggestions do you have for improving College Bound? The second guiding
research question asked students to suggest improvements for the CB Program in the
future. Responses from the 29 surveys across three classes indicated that most students
wanted a regular schedule, more field trips, and more stable contact with mentors.

Because eight (8) students interviewed were seniors who spent three years in the
CB program, these students were particularly knowledgeable about the programmatic
elements at CB during their three years at CB. Juniors, in particular, requested a more
timely SAT prep class.

The main suggestions for improvement across all data collected involved the
following four ideas: a) stabilize the irregularity of the schedule; b) Seniors, in particular,
suggested more community meetings and guest speakers, as this was an attractive
component to the CB program in their sophomore and junior years; c) provide more field
trips to colleges and museums; and, d) ensure more committed BC undergraduate
mentors to the College Bound program.

a) Create a regular Schedule. It should be noted during this year (2006-2007) the
spring schedule for seniors was more relaxed and senior students did not have to attend
each scheduled CB session during the spring semester of 2007. This was undoubtedly a
response by CB organizers that seniors went into a senioritis “slump” in the spring of
their senior year. As a result of this schedule change, many of the comments by students
on the survey, during interviews, and focus groups related to the irregular schedule they
experienced during their final semester in the College Bound Program.

Having commented on the irregular scheduling during the 2006-2007 school year, it
must be acknowledged that any collaboration between colleges and schools invariably
presents problems of priority. As far as Saturdays are concerned, it is certainly the most
convenient day for high school students to come to a college campus. The campus is
quieter and high school students are more likely to have the day free.

However, other factors limit the schedule somewhat for participating CB students. The
College Bound Program is subject to the wider Boston College schedule and, as
sometimes happens, CB cannot meet on the campus for various reasons such as home
football games on Saturdays, conferences hosted by BC that might utilize multiple
buildings on campus, or a BC semester break, etc. When these scheduled events happen
too frequently in any given year, the CB schedule can become too irregular, and students
may lose any thread of continuity from class to class when those classes do not meet
every other week in a regular routine (field notes).

For instance, when BC football teams played at home on Saturday afternoon, at
times students attended and maybe received a ticket to the game, at other times College
Bound cancelled the meeting. Another anomaly in scheduling is the long January
holiday for college students and the relatively short holiday for high school students.
This could lead to College Bound students having no scheduled meetings for 4 to 6
weeks. In my observation this sometimes caused a slowdown in momentum that could
be difficult to re-capture in the second semester, especially for seniors.
b) **Re-establish Community meetings/guest speakers.** During the 2002-2005 College Bound years, students would begin the Saturday program with a community meeting where a guest speaker would address all three groups (sophomores, juniors, and seniors) in a lecture hall before classes began. The guest was often a former CB student, a Boston College or other university professor, or a community member who was aware of the CB Program. The Saturday community meeting created a useful opening to the day and allowed students to ask questions and otherwise create a dialog with the guest speaker. By the tone of the questions and the guest speaker’s responses, this 30-40 minute exchange was valuable to all students. Many of the senior students suggested that the community meeting be re-instated to improve the CB Program for future students.

c) **Provide more field trips to colleges and museums.** When asked about favorite experiences on the survey and during interviews and focus groups, many students commented on trips to other colleges and museums. As mentioned above, the trip to Project Adventure was a highlight for many students. This suggested improvement may come from students’ curiosity to experience more of the world that they are not accustomed to seeing. Students from low income backgrounds do not generally have access to the social capital to take advantage of college visits, to see new museums, or to experience dance or theater productions. By attending College Bound, students have an opportunity to see some of these events, and appear eager to experience more.

d) **Ensure more committed undergraduate BC mentors.** The mentor program is undoubtedly a positive component to the CB experience. Due to the scheduling in this particular year (2006-2007) the mentoring program may have lost some of its usual energy due to fewer CB seniors attending in the spring and the irregular scheduling.
during the year. After all, high school students and college students require a regular schedule to understand and meet the expectations in any given program. College Bound administrators and BC mentor captains must ensure that all CB students are given the opportunity to meet frequently and regularly with BC undergraduates to help clarify and question what the college experience is all about.

**What students suggested for changes at College Bound.** To recap, students reported that CB could use some changes and many students (n=29) offered suggestions when invited to do so through a written survey, an individual interview (n=12), or participation in a *focus group (n=12; 4 students in 3 focus groups)*. Suggestions for improvement included field trips to more colleges, a more regular meeting schedule of CB sessions throughout the year, and a well-timed schedule for SAT preparation classes, especially recommended by juniors. Students also recommended that mentors should be present more regularly, the community meeting tradition with guest speakers should continue, and students from all three classes (sophomore through senior) should share some common time together on a regular basis.

If low-SES students have difficulty visiting a diverse range of college campuses on their own, then it makes perfect sense that they would want to see more colleges in order to use their newly acquired knowledge to compare and contrast different campuses. This suggestion demonstrates an active sense of the search phase of the college going process. If CB planners were to schedule more visits to different campuses it may also avoid having to cancel a College Bound Saturday session at the Boston College campus due to a home football game or campus conference.
Likewise, CB staff should be able to create a schedule that anticipates scheduling
difficulties, vacation breaks of secondary schools and colleges, and other potential
scheduling conflicts. This will allow students to be on a college campus (at BC or some
other location) more frequently, in order to instill the constant message, as one student
told me, that these CB students are “almost in college”.

Most juniors, in particular, in the written survey, during interviews, and in focus
groups commented about the SAT prep classes provided to them in the fall semester. As
appreciative as juniors were to have these classes, they recognized that the classes would
have been that much more beneficial had they been offered closer to the actual SAT test
day in the spring. This is a case when a simple polling of student suggestions for
curriculum ideas, before the schedule was set, could have helped everyone involved.

The mentor program is an important and effective component of the CB Program
and many participating students reported positive comments about their mentors for their
time commitment and sharing of college knowledge during lunch or activity time. At the
same time, it appears that in some years, the mentors may not be as visible or committed
as in other years. Clearly, the mentor component at CB has much potential to deliver
highly relevant information in an amiable and agreeable atmosphere, and CB planners
must take special care that the volunteer mentors are truly committed to CB students year
after year. Some students suggested that it might improve the mentor program if some of
the mentors came from similar backgrounds as participating students. The CB staff is
aware of the importance of the Mentor Program and has established a six member Mentor
Council that recruits mentors and monitors the Mentor Program annually *(College Bound
20th Anniversary!, 2007-2008).*
Students at all levels suggested more unifying experiences and themes at College Bound, so that all three grades could participate together. This was certainly the idea behind the community meeting held every morning as the first scheduled event on Saturdays. In some years this community meeting occurred at lunch time. In both cases the community meeting served to include everyone and reduced the isolation that students would feel due to the class schedule. The Saturday schedule is normally divided by sophomores, juniors, and seniors attending classes separately, and rarely does a scheduled class occur that blends different classes.

Of course, some of this age grouping is necessary as students are exposed to different academic concepts at various stages of their development. Seniors may be writing their college essay early in their senior year at CB, while sophomore students may require practice in their reading and writing skills appropriate to the MCAS (high stakes) test given in the second half of sophomore year. Similarly, seniors who have taken algebra and geometry may be scheduled into a pre-calculus course at CB, while sophomores and juniors may have to take a math course more appropriate to their math progress, such as algebra or geometry.

However, student instincts to share experiences across the grades appear to recognize that CB is a special program, and that students understand that they are a select group to be able to attend the CB Program at the Boston College campus. I believe students would prefer the College Bound schedule to reflect that fact by allowing students to enjoy more communal discussions, classes and/or events that might be attended by all students together. Students sense that the CB Program might provide more “social glue” and bring students together by allowing all three grades to participate
in a communal activity on a regular basis. CB organizers could become more creative in offering a range of electives that students could select on a semester basis. For example, if elective classes are offered, students from all three grades could choose one class from an array of courses. An art, music, or web design class, for example, may be a positive learning experience for a sophomore, junior, or senior CB student and need not be divided by grade or age of student.

**Utilize the Student voice.** The first major conclusion of this research is to include representative student voices in any and all educational programs as an integral component to that program. The student voice should not be considered only as an addendum. Student comments, ideas, and suggestions are full of valid and valuable insights, and educators must allow those comments to be heard.

A second major conclusion about the use of student voice is to ensure that many student voices are heard. It is too easy to overlook the silent and shy students, and recent research recommends using online opportunities to encourage shy students to “speak up” more (Redekopp & Bourbonniere, 2009). In my experience as a CB teacher of computer skills, utilizing technology productively is an excellent suggestion that could work well with CB students. Educators must hear as many different student voices as possible.

A third major conclusion is to understand that students who learn to use their voices responsibly are democratic citizens in training. Schools can contribute to the enrichment of a democratic society by consciously planning the growth and development of the student voice over time. Instructing students in the democratic tradition is too important to be left to chance or the whims and prejudices of the marketplace. Teachers have to demonstrate and actively instruct students how to use their voice responsibly.
Public schools should focus on teaching “publicness” as seriously as they teach traditional academic subjects (Goodlad, 2000). Each conclusion will be detailed below.

**Include the student voice in educational programs.** The student voice is an important component in all educational endeavors and educators must be willing and attuned to hearing it. Students are not subjects of, but participants in, their own educational programs. According to progressive educators such as Dewey, Montessori, and Freire, students are not blank slates when they come to school, but active agents in their own development. Goodlad (2000) and Cook-Sather (2006, 2009) urge educators to make a sincere effort to develop the essence of each individual student, and utilizing a student’s own voice is one way that leads to that individual development. The process of using the student voice has the capability of building the student’s self-confidence as well as a promising democratic citizen, aware of rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Educators must also be aware that students provide neither the sole, governing voice nor necessarily a “correct” voice in a given school or program. After all, adults in schools are still role models and guides to, and for, students. But to ignore student voice is tantamount to closing off the democratic dialog necessary for any progressive society. By ignoring the student voice in schools, educators also miss the opportunity to enhance agency, belonging, and competence, the ABCs of youth development (Mitra, 2004). The growth of these three traits help adolescents evolve into competent and committed adults. In effect, schools can widen and deepen the educational dialog by including student voices in a comprehensive and respectful manner.

**Many different voices must be heard.** The paper and pencil survey allowed the widest set of voices to be heard—29 (48% of participants) seniors, juniors, and sophomores...
completed the survey. In my proposal hearing, I predicted that seniors would know more about the CB Program because they had participated longer and their three years would give readers more information. My intention was to interview only senior students, and, at first look, it seemed to make sense to interview only senior students to garner more in-depth information. Although seniors did, in fact, know more than younger students, senior comments on the survey and during interviews began to approach a saturation point, such that comments began to repeat themselves with little new information (Krathwohl, 1998).

Due to the more lenient senior schedule in the second semester of 2006-7, it was somewhat fortuitous that I had to locate students from other classes to participate in the interviews and focus groups. I was only able to interview eight seniors, while four younger students stepped up and wanted to be part of the interview and focus group process. It was due to this circumstance that I discovered that juniors had a particular concern that troubled them more than the seniors—preparation for the SAT. Juniors were able to comment about the scheduling of the SAT prep class, wishing it were closer to the exam date. This information would not have been so prominent, if mentioned at all, when talking to seniors only because the seniors’ SAT experience was already well behind them by the time the survey and interviews occurred.

Representative voices from as many student groups as possible should be included to represent the student voice, otherwise important strands of student thought and concern may be unknown and possibly ignored. For example, had I interviewed a few sophomore students, they may have related a concern unique to sophomores that could have been addressed during the very next year when they became juniors. This is
when it benefits all educators to listen to the “squeaky wheels and flat tires” so that all student voices are heard.

**Student voice and democratic participation.** Many believe that public schools emphasize teaching academic skills at the cost of teaching social or civic skills (Boston, 2005; Sze, 2000). This academic/social and civic dichotomy has caused a dilemma for schools in an era of high stakes testing. Civic learning is an important trait that public schools should impart, and a dynamic democratic society will have to find a way to incorporate academic, social, and civic strands of learning. Giving students an opportunity to contribute ideas to this facet of the curriculum may help educators solve this dilemma (Yonezawa & Jones, 2009).

I believe that it is a worthy and attainable goal that the CB Program aspires to create school and community change agents. I wanted to make sure that students were an integral part of the Program who felt they had input to many aspects of the Program. My developing interest in this research grew out of a belief that the College Bound Program did not listen to students as pro-actively as they might. My observations and participation in College Bound led me to question whether students’ thoughts and opinions about the academic or social experience were given a chance to have an appropriate influence in the CB Program.

In democratic societies, educators must teach students how to become responsible public citizens, and this process can begin by learning to become good school citizens. One component in becoming a responsible democratic citizen surely includes expressing one’s ideas and opinions responsibly and honestly, and practicing in school with one’s voice is a beginning. Another component of learning to become a responsible citizen is
to earnestly listen to “the other”, and educators can model this role by actively listening to students in schools and classrooms. Barber (1995) reminds us that students learn “publicness” at public schools and Dewey (1916) contends that social and academic growth form inter-related purposes of schools. In other words, learning how to get along is not merely a coincidental side effect, but a primary task of education at all levels.

Limitations of the study. One limitation in qualitative research concerns the researcher as the main instrument of data formulation, data collection, and data analysis. Either observer bias or observer effect is possible (and sometimes both) when the participant/observer is a familiar presence for students. I believe I was able to avoid observer bias because most data originated with students, and included their words and thoughts. I was careful during the coding process to ensure that student words prevailed. Observer effect may be more difficult to discern, as many students did know me as their “teacher” on various Saturdays. I believe I made it clear, both in my letter of invitation, and during the survey period and interview sessions, that students should write and say what they truly believed. I cannot accurately say whether observer effect played a role, but I believe I kept it to a minimum.

Another limitation of qualitative research usually concerns be the limited number participants who contribute to the study. However, I believe a significant number of students were able to respond, at least on the written survey. The annual number of participants at College Bound is approximately sixty students. Twenty nine students across all three grades completed the survey (48%) and twelve students participated in the interviews and focus groups (20%). In some cases the seniors interviewed also completed a survey, so my estimate is that approximately half of the participating
students in CB contributed to the study in one way or another. I believe this is a significant participation rate for a qualitative study.

A further limitation is the uneven class participation in the interview and focus group process, even though my original design considered this a strength of the research. Had I interviewed a representative sample across all three classes, it may have produced better results for the College Bound students, administrators and curriculum designers. Although eleven sophomore students did complete a survey, only one sophomore was interviewed and that same student participated in one focus group. As mentioned previously, the small number of sophomores interviewed may have missed important issues that were unique to sophomore students.

**Implications for practice and policy.** At the College Bound Program at Boston College, planners might include a representative student group that will act as a sounding board for all participating students. That group should be represented by sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The representative students could also participate in the planning of the CB Program, including the curriculum and activity schedule during its preparation period. Research and my own observations indicate that student input may be very relevant and advantageous at this stage of planning (Cook-Sather, 2006).

In addition to including students in the planning stages, an annual CB survey followed by individual interviews and focus groups of students will add valuable data to the College Bound internal review process. A survey could be given one year, alternating with individual interviews the next year. It is possible that a graduate student, or a group of students from a research class at the Lynch School of Education, could help generate and process this information on a regular basis. In this way the data will remain current
and participating students will feel as though they are an integral part of the College Bound Program, and not merely the passive beneficiaries of Boston College’s community outreach programs.

Implications for administrators and teachers at Boston Public Schools and other low SES high schools indicate that college knowledge information must be distributed in a regular manner to the entire student body as an explicit part of the school curriculum. We must recognize that not all students will be able to participate in a local college preparation program on a college campus, at Boston College, or anywhere else. Educators must be alert to the fact that guidance counselors at low-SES schools are so overloaded at their positions that it is impossible for each of them to deliver sufficient college knowledge information to their students (Savitz-Romer, 2004).

To be effective, the school’s role to deliver this college information must be shared by the entire faculty, possibly with guidance counselors directing the flow of information (Liou et al, 2009). Research clearly indicates that teachers are a valuable ally to many low SES students (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Shaw et al., 2009; Yamamura et al. 2010). Regularly scheduled opportunities must be provided during the school year to allow teachers to help students with this college knowledge information. Teachers should develop techniques, possibly with ideas and suggestions from guidance counselors, to reach networks of students to address the three phases of college knowledge—predisposition, research, and selection. School leaders must inject this idea into the school day and/or curriculum as soon as possible.

From the survey in this study, I found that teachers, guidance counselors and school administrators accounted for 58% of the information sources from whom students
initially heard about College Bound. It should be realized that much social capital is built via these school relationships and teachers cannot underestimate their importance as a major source of social capital to low socio-economic students (Freeman 2005; Orfield 1992; Savitz-Romer 2004). The idea of social capital is a cumulative concept, and inasmuch as educators impart their knowledge about the social and academic nature of the college experience, students accumulate the necessary social capital to proceed through the essential phases of predisposition, research, and selection of a college.

Furthermore, I am not sure that College Bound (or any entity) directly “teaches” social capital. In my experience in the Program I did not observe, or hear about, any one instructor teaching a topic called social capital. Social capital is a by-product of what students learn and how they learn it. Just as wealthier students are beneficiaries of family or community generated social capital, they too simply acquire social capital in the process of living their social lives. Similarly, participating students at College Bound enhance their social capital by attending the Program for three years at the Boston College campus.

Schools, colleges, and government at all levels could also collaborate on an annual “college knowledge day” that would act as a “teach-in” for many students and their families. This could be a normal school day or a Saturday, but the point would be for educators to broadcast information that students from low SES backgrounds usually are not aware of, and/or do not ask about. The NAACP has sponsored such days and calls it a “National Day of College Preparation.”

My suggestion would be to institute this “college knowledge day” at the state level for three reasons. First, it is easier to coordinate such an event at the state level as
fewer people and institutions have to be mobilized. Second, a vast majority of students apply to, and attend, their in-state colleges and universities. Three, the event should be viewed by the state political and educational leaders as a good idea to support. Key personnel in high schools, colleges, and state government could formulate a plan in how best to utilize the College Knowledge Day. As a result, states could customize college knowledge for a “local” audience.

Parents of low-SES students must also become a target audience for college knowledge information, and schools and colleges must present this information early and often in order that these parents can support their children as they develop their predisposition to attend a post-secondary institution. Farmer-Hinton (2008) relates that parent support is an acknowledged, but usually insufficient support, because low SES parents who have not attended college, have more difficulty offering specific advice for their children with college plans. Schools and colleges could begin distributing this pre-college information as early as the seventh grade for students and their parents.

Colleges could become a collaborative partner in every low SES school community by presenting information in cooperation with high school administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors with a united message that reduces the mystery and confusion of the college application process. This is easier to do when a student attends a college preparatory program on its campus, but colleges must go beyond their physical boundaries and bring the message directly to those schools with low SES student populations.

The implications for practice and policy for educators at the college level include the establishment of a college preparatory program on each campus, if it does not already
have one. The cost to students of such a program cannot be prohibitive, and should be free to students from low-SES backgrounds. The college preparatory program may be small, and entrance criteria can be established by each college, but the process of overseeing a college preparation program should enlighten college admission personnel about the many issues affecting low SES students. Once the colleges and universities understand these students’ struggles, aided by listening to students’ voices, they may be able to offer a more helpful solution to the persistent problem of inadequate college preparation by low-SES students.

The existence of such a program at each college signals to the participating students, the sending secondary schools, and parents that colleges recognize their role in opening the campus to students who traditionally are intimidated by, and/or unprepared for, higher education. College personnel must be able to contribute more current and relevant knowledge to high school guidance counselors and low SES students and their parents, addressing the justification and cost of attending college as well as the procedure for completing the college application and financial aid process. The current knowledge gap between colleges and low-SES students must be closed significantly and both colleges and schools share the responsibility to close it.

**Implications for further research.** Students from wealthier households, who may be as confused about the college application process as their poorer peers, nevertheless have social capital in the form of parents, family connections, dedicated (and sufficient) college counselors, and peer groups who help each other navigate the college knowledge process. Most students from low SES households usually have none of these advantages, and it is no coincidence that they are underrepresented at the college level.
The College Bound Program provides the social capital to participating students from two Boston public high schools to develop intellectually and socially in order to have a good opportunity to become college students.

Former CB Director George Ladd recommended research that would track College Bound students after they graduate high school and enroll in college. Although it was one of his intentions as the Director of College Bound, he was never able to find the time and resources to accomplish this longitudinal research (Ladd 2010b). The Lynch School of Education might want to support this research in order to analyze the long-term effect that the College Bound Program has on its graduates. One way to begin this longitudinal research might be to host a reunion of all CB graduates and ask attendees to comment on their experiences. The College Bound Program currently is certainly worthwhile and necessary, and the needs of the Boston school community will always be present. Past graduates of the CB program may be able to guide current CB administrators and teachers toward the next phase of the CB curriculum.

National and state educational organizations, private foundations and think tanks, colleges, universities, and public schools all share a common interest to ensure that low-SES students have an opportunity to enroll and graduate from college. Recent reports from the College Board (Education Pays, 2010) and ACT (Mind the Gaps, 2010) have addressed this issue, and educators must contribute their efforts to make it a reality. The College Board report makes it clear that the earning power of college graduates is substantially greater than high school or community college graduates (Education Pays, 2010). The ACT report alerts readers to the knowledge gap in the high school curriculum.
for students who do not know which courses are more beneficial for college preparation 
*Mind the Gaps, 2010*.

College preparation programs are numerous and varied around the country, and the Greater Boston metropolitan area abounds with many different models. The colleges and universities in the Boston area alone could host a “best practices” conference on college preparation programs. Some of these programs include College Bound at Boston College, the Crimson Academy at Harvard University, Summer Discovery at Northeastern University, and Upward Bound at Boston University. These four institutions likely would be able to share their experiences and assist in the creation of a model program for those colleges and universities seeking to begin, or improve, their own college preparation program.

American universities and colleges are generally acknowledged to be one of the important engines of the 21st century economy, and in that role, they should make a major effort to ensure that all students receive appropriate knowledge to facilitate a transition to college. Extra preparation—academically, socially, and financially—is required for low SES students, and colleges and universities must contribute their efforts to that research. It is important that whenever and wherever this research is carried out, that student voices are invited, listened to, and honored.

**Conclusion**

The College Bound Program at Boston College has been providing relevant college knowledge to Boston Public School students for more than twenty years. Participating students understand that they are expected to attend two Saturdays each
month for their sophomore, junior, and senior years of high school. Most students willingly give up their Saturdays for the chance to come to the Boston College campus.

The College Bound Program does succeed with its diverse programming and tries to provide enough topics of interest for all students who attend. Some of those components include regular attendance on a college campus, an ongoing discussion of college itself, what is it and why an individual might attend college; the cost of college and the application for financial aid, lunch with contemporary college students who act as mentors, site visits to other college campuses; mentoring and support in academic subjects and/or career exploration; and parental education about college (Gandara, 2001; Kezar, 2001a).

Nearly all students surveyed and interviewed recognize that the College Bound Program is an excellent opportunity to learn more about the college experience. Their frequent interaction with the College Bound teachers and Boston College student-mentors builds self-confidence as students move through the stages of searching and selecting colleges to attend upon graduation from high school. The fact that almost all students who complete the College Bound Program each year are accepted at four-year colleges is a commendable achievement for each student as well as the College Bound Program.

This study has contributed an additional source of data that may help enhance the College Bound Program in the future—the participating students’ voices. Students are uniquely situated to give us accurate information simply for the asking, and they know a lot of what is happening around them. The Program exists for the (approximately 60) students from Brighton High School and the West Roxbury Educational Complex and their perceptions and opinions “can shock us into new awareness, if we accede a little.
The ground shifts and we are forced (or invited) to make sense of all that is before us to discover something truer, more layered, more nuanced, more complex . . .” (Ayers, 2004).

In trying to improve itself, the College Bound Program periodically modifies its criteria for student admission to the Program, its schedule, and curriculum offerings. As effective as they are at reaching and teaching high school students, the College Bound staff members change as graduate students come and go over the years. The undergraduate students who serve as Boston College mentors are also a valuable, but variable set of influences for participating students. As a participant/observer in the College Bound Program for four years, I have taught, observed, and listened to many students in those four years. It is been my intent to include the ideas, perceptions and suggestions of those individuals who are the focus of this study (Freeman 2005).

The central tenet of this research has been to ensure that participating student voices in the College Bound Program are listened to, honored, and fully integrated into the future planning and programming of the College Bound Program at Boston College. Students are the main reason the CB Program exists, but, as we have observed, they rarely have a role in the educational decision-making processes in which they are the active participants and beneficiaries. Adults cannot fully replicate the students’ knowledge and perspective, but they can utilize that knowledge to improve the programs ostensibly organized for students. Inviting students into the process to develop or change a program would demonstrate a confidence and trust that students rarely receive (Mitra 2009).
Although student voices at College Bound undoubtedly cover a wide range of academic and social perspectives, from the most self-confident “world beaters” to the “squeaky wheels and flat tires,” the College Bound Program staff would be wise to listen those voices actively and attentively. The results of such an inclusive process would be a mutual ownership of all stakeholders as well as an enhanced sense of community for participating students in the College Bound Program at Boston College.
Appendix A

Data Collection Instruments

1. Survey for all participating students

2. One-on-One interview questions.

3. Focus group questions
COLLEGE BOUND AT BOSTON COLLEGE
STUDENT SURVEY
2006-2007

General Information

A1. What grade are you in high school? 10th ____ 11th ____ 12th ____

A2. Are you? Male ______ Female ______

A3. My ethnic/racial background is (please check all that apply)

Asian American _____ African American _____ Hispanic American ___

Native American ____ White ____ Other ______________________

A4. Please check the highest level of education received by your parents or guardian:

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A5. How many years (including this year) have you attended the College Bound Program at Boston College? ________________________

A6. Will you be the first in your family to attend college? Yes ____ No ____

A7. Do you have an older brother or sister who is currently enrolled in college or has completed a college degree? Yes ____ No ____

A8. In my high school courses, the grades I receive are mostly:

(A’s ____)(A’s and B’s ___) (B’s ___)(B’s and C’s ___) (C’s ___)(C’s and D’s ___)

A9. How did you find out initially about the College Bound Program at Boston College?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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College Bound Activities

B1. Below is a list of activities in the College Bound Program. Please rank on a scale from 1 to 4—the activity’s interest for you. Add other activities that you thought were relevant and/or interesting

1= not interesting at all

2= somewhat interesting

3= interesting

4= very interesting

NA= not applicable to me

a) community speaker(s)      _____

b) academic classes       _____

c) BC student mentor activities     _____

d) Recreation time at indoor athletic facility    _____

e) BC admissions information     _____

f) BC financial aid workshop      _____

g) field trip to:_________________________   _____

h) other  _________________________    _____

i) other  _________________________    _____

B2. List three (3) specific activities you have experienced at College Bound THIS OR LAST YEAR that you believe helped you with the college knowledge process:

1) ___________________________________________________

2) ___________________________________________________

3) ___________________________________________________
Student Suggestions
Please respond to the prompt:

Q1. I would___ would not____ (check one) recommend the College Bound Program at Boston College to my younger brother or sister (if I had one) because

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

Q2. Three college knowledge ideas I have learned at College Bound Program include

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

Q3. Three activities or ideas I would like to add to the College Bound Program include

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

Q4. Three of the problems that should be fixed at College Bound are

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

Q5. I would like to return as a guest speaker to the College Bound Program at some point in the future. yes ______ no _________

Why? Or why not? ______________________________________________________
Freewrite

This last page is for you to write anything related to the College Bound Program that you feel would be useful to future students or College Bound Program organizers.

**Options Include (but are not limited to):**

You could suggest ideas that were not mentioned at all.

You could address any question already asked that you feel you want to write about in greater detail.

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ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How long have you attended College Bound at Boston College?

2. What do you think you have learned by attending College Bound?

3. Has College Bound changed your thinking about colleges to which you might apply?

4. Do you think College Bound should meet more frequently? Less frequently? Why or why not?

5. If College Bound met at the same time on Saturdays at your high school, would you attend the program? Why or why not?

6. Do you think College Bound should have more students attend the program? Do you think College Bound should have fewer students attend the program? Why?

7. In what ways has attending College Bound helped you to learn about the financial cost of attending college?

8. In what ways has attending College Bound helped you to learn about financial aid for college?

9. What have been your favorite experiences in College Bound up to this point?

10. If you were given the chance to make three changes in College Bound for next year’s program, what would those changes be?

11. Would you return to College Bound as a guest speaker while you are in college?
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Has College Bound changed your thinking about colleges to which you might apply?

2. What do you think you have learned by attending College Bound?

3. Do you think College Bound should meet more frequently? Less frequently? Why or why not?

4. If College Bound met at the same time on Saturdays at your high school, would you attend the program? Why or why not?

5. In what ways has attending College Bound helped you to learn about the financial cost of attending college?

6. In what ways has attending College Bound helped you to learn about financial aid for college?

7. What have been your favorite experiences in College Bound up to this point?

8. If this group were given the chance to make five changes in College Bound for next year’s program, what would those changes be?

Thank you.
Appendix B

Letters of Consent
To Parents or Guardians of students in the College Bound Program at Boston College:

My name is James Generoso, and I am a graduate student at Boston College. I also teach in the College Bound program on Saturdays.

I am in the process of writing a doctoral dissertation (a lengthy research report) on the College Bound Program at Boston College. I hope this experience will help the College Bound Program improve its offerings to your children and the children who participate in College Bound in the future.

One part of the research process for my dissertation involves administering a survey to all students in College Bound. I will use the results of this survey to guide me in my focus of what students think about the College Bound Program. Another part of the process concerns interviewing a few students to ask more specific questions about their perception regarding the College Bound Program at Boston College. These interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed into a hard copy report as part of my analysis. The interview questions will elicit your child’s suggestions and comments about the College Bound program and should take no more than thirty minutes each. The interviewed students will also be asked similar questions as a “focus group” where four to six students will discuss the College Bound Program together. **In general, the questions will ask your child what he/she believes he or she has learned as a participant in the College Bound Program. I will conduct all interviews and college pr sessions myself and each will require approximately thirty minutes. Interviews and focus group sessions will be audiotaped and transcribed and I will retain all copies in my home office.**

All surveys and interviews will take place when your children are at the College Bound Program on Saturdays, most likely during the lunch hour, or before or after classes. Your child’s name will not be used for the survey, interview, or focus group. **All surveys and interviews will be anonymous and all data gathered will be destroyed in seven years.** Participating in an interview and a focus group is voluntary and there is minimal risk to your child. Each student selected for an interview will receive two tickets to a Boston movie theater after the interview and focus group process is complete.

I consider student opinions to be of great value in making positive changes to the College Bound Program at Boston College. Students can decline to take part and can stop the interview at any time. I hope to interview only those who truly want to take part in the improvement process. **The surveys, interviews, and focus groups will take place during the College Bound meeting hours on the Boston College campus during the regular scheduled meetings on Saturdays in the spring months of 2007.**

I am obligated to ask parents or guardians of all students who want to participate to sign the form below, granting their consent to allow their child to participate in the interview and the focus group. I cannot conduct an interview or a focus group with your child without your signed permission. Let me repeat, any risk to your child is minimal. Your child can decline to be interviewed, and he or she can discontinue the process at any time. There will be no penalty if your child does not participate in this process.

You are welcome to a copy of the summary of the final report when it is complete. The summary should be available through the office of College Bound at Boston College or from the principal at Brighton High School or West Roxbury High School.
If you have any questions regarding this research, please call James Generoso at 781 314 5453 or his faculty adviser, Dr. Irwin Blumer at 617-552-1956. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, please call the Boston College Office for Human Research Participation Protection at 617-552-4778.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mr. James Generoso
Phone 781 444-5104
Email: generoso@bc.edu

I give permission for my son/daughter, _______________________________, to take part in the research of Mr. James Generoso, a doctoral student at Boston College. I further understand that my child will be asked to complete an anonymous survey, and may be selected for an interview and a focus group. It is my understanding that the Boston Public Schools, Office of Research, Professor Montavon (Director of the College Bound Program at Boston College), and Mr. Don Pellegrini (Headmaster, West Roxbury Education Complex) or Mr. Toby Romer (Headmaster, Brighton High School) have given their permission to Mr. Generoso to administer a survey and conduct this interview and focus group at Boston College during the meeting hours of the College Bound program on Saturdays.

Please Print: Last Name _____________________________ First Name: _______________________

Signature: ___________________________________________ Today’s Date: _____________

RETURN TO: Mr. James Generoso at College Bound when signed. Thank you.
To all students in the College Bound Program:

My name is James Generoso, and I am a graduate student at Boston College. I also teach in the College Bound program on Saturdays.

I am in the process of writing a doctoral dissertation (a lengthy research report) on the College Bound Program at Boston College. I hope this experience will help the College Bound Program improve its offerings to you and future students in this program. Toward that end, I would like to invite you to participate in a survey to hear your opinions and suggestions about your experience with the College Bound Program. I consider student opinions to be of great value in making positive changes to the College Bound program, and I expect to have some interesting conversations with many of you during this year. In general, the questions will ask you what you believe you have learned as a participant in the College Bound Program.

I will use the results of the survey to guide me in my focus of what students say they are learning in the College Bound Program. Another part of the process involves interviewing a few students to ask more specific questions about their perception about the College Bound Program at Boston College. These interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed into a hard copy report as part of my analysis. The interview questions will ask for suggestions and comments about the College Bound program and should take approximately thirty minutes each. The interviewed students will also be asked similar questions as a “focus group” where four to six students will discuss the College Bound Program together. The focus group will also be audiotaped and transcribed. I will conduct all interviews and focus group sessions myself and each will require approximately thirty minutes. Your participation will remain anonymous, and I will retain all copies in my home office where they will be destroyed in seven years.

The surveys, interviews, and focus groups will take place during the College Bound meeting hours on the Boston College campus. You should know that your names will not be used during the taping session. You should refrain from using other students’ names during the interview or focus group process. Participating in an interview is voluntary and there is minimal risk to you. All surveys, focus groups, and interviews will be anonymous and all data gathered will be destroyed in seven years.

As part of the Boston College research process, I am obligated to request all students who want to participate to sign the form below granting their consent to participate in the survey, focus group, and interview process. I cannot conduct an interview or a survey with you without your signed permission. Because you are minors still attending school, I must also ask your parent or legal guardian to sign a separate permission form. I must have two forms signed and returned from each student before I can administer the survey. You can decline to take the survey or to be interviewed, and you can discontinue the process at any time. There will be no penalty for not participating in this process. Each student selected for an interview will receive two tickets to a Boston movie theater after the interview and focus group process is complete.

Let me repeat that I consider student opinions to be of great value in making positive changes to the College Bound Program at Boston College. You can decline to take part in the survey and can stop the interview at any time. My hope is to interview only those truly willing to take part in improving the College Bound Program for future students. You are welcome to a
copy of the summary of the final report when it is complete. The summary should be available through the office of College Bound at Boston College or from your principal at your high school.

If you have any questions regarding this research, please call James Generoso at 781 314 5453 or his faculty adviser, Dr. Irwin Blumer at 617-552-1956. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, please call the Boston College Office for Human Research Participation Protection at 617-552-4778.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mr. James Generoso
Phone 781 314 5453
Email: generoso@bc.edu

I, ____________________________, agree to participate in the research of Mr. James Generoso, a doctoral student at Boston College. **I understand that I will be asked to participate in an anonymous written survey. I further understand that I may be selected for an interview and a focus group.** It is my understanding that Professor Montavon (Director of the College Bound Program at Boston College), and Mr. Pellegrini (Headmaster, West Roxbury Education Complex) or Mr. Toby Romer (Headmaster, Brighton High School) have given their permission to Mr. Generoso to administer the survey and **conduct the interview and focus group** at Boston College during the meeting hours of the College Bound program on Saturdays.

**Please Print:** Last Name ___________________________ First Name: ___________________________

Signature: ___________________________________________ Today’s Date: ____________

(Senior Students Only)
RETURN TO Mr. James Generoso at College Bound when signed. Thank you.
Professor Montavon:

As you know through previous conversations, I am in the process of writing my doctoral dissertation on the College Bound Program at Boston College. I hope this experience will help the College Bound Program improve its offerings to current and future students in the College Bound Program.

One part of the research process for my dissertation involves giving an anonymous survey to all students. I will use the results of this survey to guide me in my focus on student opinions about the College Bound Program. Information from the survey could generate interesting data for you and the program.

I will then interview between 10-14 students in the program, mostly seniors. These interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed into a hard copy report as part of my analysis. The interview questions concern student suggestions and comments regarding the College Bound program and should take no more than thirty minutes each. The interviewed students will also be asked similar questions as a “focus group” where four to six students will discuss the College Bound Program together.

All surveys and interviews will take place when students attend the College Bound Program on Saturdays. Students’ names will not be used during the taping session.

I have prepared letters for each potential student-participant and their parent/guardian, as well as the two principals—Mr. Romer at Brighton High School and Mr. Pellegrini at West Roxbury High School and cluster leaders in the Boston Public Schools. I do not intend to interview students in depth until you, the two principals, and the Office of Research of the Boston Public Schools have signed off on the appropriate forms. I intend to provide the College Bound office with a copy of the completed dissertation. Other readers may approach you with a request to read the dissertation in the future.

I consider student opinions to be of great value in making positive changes to the College Bound program. Students can decline to take part and can stop the interview at any time. I intend to interview only those students willing to take part. Students who are interviewed will receive two tickets to a Boston movie theater.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mr. James Generoso
Phone 781 444-5104
Email: generoso@bc.edu

I give permission for students attending the College Bound Program at Boston College to be surveyed and interviewed by Mr. James Generoso, a graduate student working on his dissertation. It is my understanding that each student has been informed of the research. I also understand that each student’s parent/guardian has given his/her permission to Mr. Generoso to conduct the interview at Boston College during the meeting hours of the College Bound program on Saturdays. The Boston Public Schools’ research protocol will be followed by Mr. Generoso after he secures permission from the Office of Research, Assessment and Evaluation at the Boston Public Schools.

Please Print: Last Name _____________________________ First Name: _______________________

Signature: _____________________________________________ Today’s Date: _____________
Mr. Toby Romer:

My name is James Generoso, and I am a graduate student at Boston College. I also teach in the College Bound program on Saturdays.

I am in the process of writing a doctoral dissertation on the College Bound Program at Boston College. I hope this experience will help the College Bound Program improve its offerings to your current students and those who will participate in College Bound in the future.

One part of the research process for my dissertation involves administering a survey to all students in College Bound. I will use the results of this survey to guide me in my focus of what students think about the College Bound Program. Another part of the process concerns interviewing a few students to ask more specific questions about their perception of the College Bound Program at Boston College. These interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed into a hard copy report as part of my analysis. The interview questions will elicit your students’ suggestions and comments about the College Bound program and should take no more than thirty minutes each. The interviewed students will then be asked similar questions as a “focus group” where four to six students will discuss the College Bound Program together.

All surveys and interviews will take place when students attend the College Bound Program on Saturdays, most likely during the lunch hour or before or after classes. You should know that your students’ surnames will not be used during the taping session.

As part of the Boston Public Schools research protocol, I am obligated to ask the Principal of the school which the students attend to sign the form below, granting your consent to allow students to participate in the survey and interview process. I cannot conduct an interview or give a survey to your students without your signed permission. Because the College Bound Program is a collaborative effort between Boston College and the Boston Public Schools, I need your permission to proceed with the research involved in a survey and interview of students at Brighton High School. I will provide you with a summary of my research or a copy of the completed dissertation, whichever you prefer.

I consider student opinions to be of great value in making positive changes to the College Bound program. Students can decline to take part and can stop the interview at any time. The interview process hopes to utilize only those willing to take part.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mr. James Generoso
Phone 781 444-5104
Email: generoso@bc.edu

I give permission for students from Brighton High School to take part in the interview with Mr. James Generoso, a doctoral student at Boston College. I am aware that the Office of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation of the Boston Public Schools must grant permission for this research to proceed. It is my understanding that each student is aware of the research, each student’s parent/guardian, and Professor Montavon (Director of the College Bound Program at Boston College) have given their permission to Mr. Generoso to administer the survey and conduct this interview at Boston College during the meeting hours of the College Bound program on Saturdays.

Please Print: Last Name _____________________________ First Name: _______________________

Signature: _____________________________________________ Today’s Date: ___________
West Roxbury Educational Complex Headmaster

May, 2005

Mr. Don Pellegrini:

My name is James Generoso, and I am a graduate student at Boston College. I also teach in the College Bound program on Saturdays.

I am in the process of writing a doctoral dissertation on the College Bound Program at Boston College. I hope this experience will help the College Bound Program improve its offerings to your current students and those students who will participate in College Bound in the future.

One part of the research process for my dissertation involves administering a survey to all students in College Bound. I will use the results of this survey to guide me in my focus of what students think about the College Bound Program. Another part of the process concerns interviewing a few students to ask more specific questions about their perception of the College Bound Program at Boston College. These interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed into a hard copy report as part of my analysis. The interview questions will elicit your students’ suggestions and comments about the College Bound program and should take no more than thirty minutes each. The interviewed students will then be asked similar questions as a “focus group” where four to six students will discuss the College Bound Program together.

All surveys and interviews will take place when students attend the College Bound Program on Saturdays, most likely during the lunch hour or before or after classes. You should know that your students’ surnames will not be used during the taping session.

As part of the Boston Public Schools research protocol, I am obligated to ask the Principal of the school which the students attend to sign the form below, granting your consent to allow students to participate in the survey and interview process. I cannot conduct an interview or give a survey to your students without your signed permission. Because the College Bound Program is a collaborative effort between Boston College and the Boston Public Schools, I need your permission to proceed with the research involved in a survey and interview of students at West Roxbury High School. I will provide you with a summary of the research or a completed copy of the dissertation, whichever you prefer.

I consider student opinions to be of great value in making positive changes to the College Bound program. Students can decline to take part and can stop the interview at any time. The interview process hopes to utilize only those willing to take part.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mr. James Generoso
Phone 781 444-5104
Email: generoso@bc.edu

I give permission for students from West Roxbury High School to take part in the interview with Mr. James Generoso, a doctoral student at Boston College. I am aware that the Office of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation of the Boston Public Schools must grant permission for this research to proceed. It is my understanding that students have been informed of the process. In addition, each student’s parent/guardian and Professor Montavon (Director of the College Bound Program at Boston College) have given their permission to Mr. Generoso to administer the survey and conduct this interview at Boston College during the meeting hours of the College Bound program on Saturdays.

Please Print:  Last Name  __________ First Name:  __________
Signature:  ___________________________________________ Today’s Date:  __________

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May, 2005

Mrs. Regina Senier:

My name is James Generoso and I am a graduate student at Boston College. I wrote to your office last summer and received all the instructions necessary to apply to do research that relates to the Boston Public Schools and its students.

I am in the process of writing a doctoral dissertation on the College Bound Program at Boston College. College Bound at Boston College has existed since 1987 and students from both West Roxbury and Brighton High Schools attend the program on the Boston College on alternate Saturdays. I hope this experience will help the College Bound Program improve its offerings to Boston Public School students currently and the students who will participate in College Bound in the future. I also teach in the College Bound Program.

One part of the research process for my dissertation involves giving a survey to all participants in College Bound. Another part of the process involves interviewing approximately ten to fourteen students to ask more specific questions about their perception about the College Bound Program at Boston College. The interviewed students will then be asked similar questions as a “focus group” where four to six students will discuss the College Bound Program as a group.

I consider student opinions to be of great value in making positive changes to the College Bound program. Students can decline to take part and can stop the interview at any time. The interview process will utilize only those students willing to take part.

All surveys and interviews will take place when students attend the College Bound Program on Saturdays, most likely during the lunch hour or during class time at the campus. Students’ names will not be used during the taping session. No interruption of Boston Public School teaching will occur because the interviews will be conducted at the Boston College campus during the College Bound Program hours on Saturdays. The Boston College protocol for research covers many of the areas required by your office. I have submitted an “Intent to Propose” document to Professor Janice Jackson, my adviser, and have provided a copy of a form signed by Professor Jackson acknowledging that she is my adviser for this research. An application of my Human Subjects Review to Boston College Institutional Review Board also addresses many of your questions regarding research in the Boston Public Schools. I have included a copy of both documents as part of my application to your office.

I am aware that once I get permission from your office, I am obligated to ask the Headmaster of the school where the students attend regularly to sign a similar form. I intend to deliver such a letter to Mr. Pellegrini at West Roxbury High School and Mr. Romer at Brighton High School.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mr. James Generoso
Phone 781 444-5104
Email: generoso@bc.edu

Permission is granted for students attending the College Bound Program at Boston College to take part in the interview with Mr. James Generoso, a doctoral student at Boston College. It is understood that each student, and each student’s parent/guardian, has given their permission to Mr. Generoso to conduct this interview at Boston College during the meeting hours of the College Bound program on Saturdays. Mr. Generoso will secure permission from the two building principals once the Boston Public Schools’ Office of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation grants permission to him.

Please Print: Last Name _____________________________ First Name: _______________________
Signature: _____________________________________________ Today’s Date: _____________
May, 2005

Mrs. Regina Senier  
Office of Research, Assessment and Evaluation  
Boston Public Schools  
26 Court Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Mrs. Regina Senier:

This letter accompanies the documents enclosed in order to apply for permission to research the College Bound Program at Boston College. I have included other requirements on the appendix sheet attached to this letter.

I have submitted an “Intent to Propose” document to Dr. Jackson, my adviser at Boston College. We have worked closely to edit the document, and she has acknowledged its acceptance at Boston College by signing the appropriate form. A copy of her signing as my adviser at Boston College has been enclosed in this packet.

I have addressed all concerns of Boston Public Schools as listed in the document you sent me last fall “Policy and Procedures for Conducting Educational Research in the Boston Public Schools.”

I also thought I would enclose two documents that I am required to write for the Ph.D. requirements at Boston College. One document is the Intent to Submit Proposal, which, as I mentioned above, has been accepted at Boston College. The other document, an application for Human Subjects Review, will not be submitted to Boston College until permission from Boston Public Schools has been granted. I have enclosed these documents because they address many of the academic, social and ethical concerns you have for research in the Boston Public Schools. I am not sure whether the Boston College documents had to be enclosed, but I thought they may bring more detail to the process.

I hope this letter and the enclosed documents satisfy the Boston Public Schools research protocol. I am eager to begin the research. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

James Generoso

Cc: attachment
Appendix C

1. Boston College IRB certificate

2. Boston Public Schools Research Proposal Form
The Human Research Participant Protection Program
Certifies that
Jim Generoso
 Attended the Tutorial on Human Participant Research

Signature

Date

Office of the Human Research Participant Protection Program, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, Phone: 617-552-2870, Fax: 617-552-2871, Email: crispen@bc.edu
Boston Public Schools
Research, Assessment and Evaluation
Maryellen Donahue, Director

RESEARCH PROPOSAL NOTIFICATION FORM

The research proposal described below has been:

X APPROVED

DISAPPROVED

Maryellen Donahue, Director
Office of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation

283 Franklin St.
Boston, MA 02110

617-635-9450 Voice
617-635-9416 Fax

www.bostonpublicschools.org
Appendix D

College Bound Sample

College Bound Student Contract
2002, 2003, 2004
## College Bound 2002 - 2003 Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FALL 2002</th>
<th>Classrooms reserved</th>
<th>SAT Test Dates &amp; Deadlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **September 14** | Cushing 001 (8:30-2:30)  
O’Neil 245, 246, 253 (9:00-12:15)  
Campion 231 & 236 (9:00-2:30) | |
| **September 21** | Gasson 1 (9:00-2:30)  
Gasson 1-mac’s #25 Gasson 9-IBM #18  
Cushing 001 (8:30-2:30)  
O’Neil 245, 246, 253 (9:00-12:15)  
Campion 231 & 236 (9:00-2:30) | |
| **October 5** | Gasson 1 (9:00-2:30)  
Cushing 001 (8:30-2:30)  
O’Neil 245, 246, 253 (9:00-12:15)  
Campion 231 & 236 (9:00-2:30) | **October 12**  
(Registration deadline 9/10) |
| **October 25** | Gasson 1 (9:00-2:30)  
Cushing 001 (8:30-2:30)  
O’Neil 245, 246, 253 (9:00-12:15)  
Campion 231 & 236 (9:00-2:30) | |
| **November 2** | Gasson 1 (9:00-2:30)  
Cushing 001 (8:30-2:30)  
O’Neil 245, 246, 253 (9:00-12:15)  
Campion 231 & 236 (9:00-2:30) | **November 2**  
(Registration deadline 9/27) |
| **November 23** | Gasson 1 (9:00-2:30)  
Cushing 001 (8:30-2:30)  
O’Neil 245, 246, 253 (9:00-12:15)  
Campion 231 & 236 (9:00-2:30) | |
| **December 7** | Gasson 1 (9:00-2:30)  
Cushing 001 (8:30-2:30)  
O’Neil 245, 246, 253 (9:00-12:15)  
Campion 231 & 236 (9:00-2:30) | **December 7**  
(Registration deadline 11/1) |
| **December 14** | Gasson 1 (9:00-2:30)  
Finals-need student services to check on x3301  
Shea Function Room 11:30-2:30 | |
| **January 4** | Gasson 1 (9:00-2:30)  
Cushing 001 (8:30-2:30)  
O’Neil 245, 246, 253 (9:00-12:15)  
Campion 231 & 236 (9:00-2:30) | |
| **January 11** | Gasson 1 (9:00-2:30)  
Cushing 001 (8:30-2:30)  
O’Neil 245, 246, 253 (9:00-12:15)  
Campion 231 & 236 (9:00-2:30) | **January 25**  
(Registration deadline 12/23) |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>June 7 (registration deadline 5/2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Sophomores</td>
<td>Juniors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 8:55 - 9:45 | Community Meeting  
Guest Speaker- Dean Cawthorne  
Location: Cushing 001 |                                               |                                              |
| 9:50 - 10:20 | Parents & Students  
Discussion on Academics & Expectations  
Instructor: J. Cawthorne  
Location: Cushing 001  
Asst: TBA | 9:50-10:50  
Class: SAT Verbal  
Instructor: A. Han  
Location: TBA  
Asst: TBA | 9:50-10:50  
Class: College Application Discussion  
Instructor: D. Davis  
Location: TBA  
Asst: TBA |
| 10:20 - 10:50 | Parents & Students  
Bus Tour of campus  
Instructor: J. Galeota |                                               |                                              |
| 11:00 - 11:55 | Parents & ALL Students  
Paul Bonitto – BC Admissions  
Location: Cushing 001 |                                               |                                              |
| 12:00 - 1:00 | Lunch |                                               |                                              |
| 1:05 - 2:20 | Lyons Hall - Photo IDs  
Instructor: S. Debolt | Class: Writing  
Instructor: J. Raposo  
Location: TBA  
Asst: TBA | Class: SAT Math  
Instructor: T. Whelsky  
Location: TBA  
Asst: TBA |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Sophomores</th>
<th>Juniors</th>
<th>Seniors</th>
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<td>8:55 - 9:20</td>
<td>Community Meeting</td>
<td>Class: SAT Verbal</td>
<td>Class: Senior Workshop</td>
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<td>Guest Speaker</td>
<td>Instructor: A. Han</td>
<td>Instructor: D. Davis</td>
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<td>Location: TBA</td>
<td>Location: TBA</td>
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<td>Group A: Writing</td>
<td>Class: SAT Math</td>
<td>Class: Library/Comp</td>
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<td>Instructor: S. Debolt</td>
<td>Instructor: T. Whelsky</td>
<td>Instructor: J. Generoso</td>
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<td>Location: TBA</td>
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<td>Group B: Science?</td>
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<td>Group B: Writing</td>
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<td>Instructor: S. Debolt</td>
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<td>Group A: Science?</td>
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<td>Instructor:</td>
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<td>12:00 - 1:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>Class: Writing</td>
<td>Class:</td>
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<td>Instructor: J. Raposo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Sophomores</td>
<td>Juniors</td>
<td>Seniors</td>
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<td>Community Meeting</td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Ana Martinez-Aleman</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:23 - 10:35</td>
<td><strong>Group A</strong>: Writing</td>
<td><strong>Class</strong>: SAT Verbal</td>
<td><strong>Class</strong>: Senior Workshop</td>
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<td>Instructor: S. Debolt</td>
<td>Instructor: A. Han</td>
<td>Instructor: D. Davis</td>
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<td><strong>Group B</strong>: Learning to Learn</td>
<td><strong>Group</strong>: SAT Math</td>
<td><strong>Class</strong>: Libraries/Computers</td>
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<td>Instructor: G. Simidian</td>
<td>Instructor: T. Whelsky</td>
<td>Instructor: J. Generoso</td>
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<td>Location: TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:40-11:50</td>
<td><strong>Group A</strong>: Writing</td>
<td><strong>Group</strong>: Library/Computers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Instructor: S. Debolt</td>
<td><strong>Group</strong>: Library/Computers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location: TBA</td>
<td>Instructor: J. Generoso</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Asst: TBA</td>
<td>Location: TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group B</strong>: Learning to Learn</td>
<td>Asst: TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor: G. Simidian</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Location: TBA</td>
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<td>Asst: TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00-2:20</td>
<td><strong>MENTOR KICKOFF</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dorm Tour</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K. Zimmerman</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lunch is provided</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>SOPHOMORES</td>
<td>JUNIORS</td>
<td>SENIORS</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:55 - 9:20</td>
<td><strong>Community Meeting</strong>&lt;br&gt;Guest Speaker: Nigel Melville&lt;br&gt;Location: TBA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9:25 - 10:35</td>
<td><strong>Group A: Writing</strong>&lt;br&gt;Instructor: S. Debolt&lt;br&gt;Location: TBA&lt;br&gt;Asst: TBA</td>
<td><strong>Class: SAT Math Prep</strong>&lt;br&gt;Instructor: T. Whelsky&lt;br&gt;Location: TBA&lt;br&gt;Asst: TBA</td>
<td><strong>Class: Senior Workshop</strong>&lt;br&gt;Instructor: D. Davis&lt;br&gt;Location: TBA&lt;br&gt;Asst: TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group B: Computers</strong>&lt;br&gt;Instructor: Generoso&lt;br&gt;Location: TBA&lt;br&gt;Asst: TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:40 - 11:50</td>
<td><strong>Group B: Writing</strong>&lt;br&gt;Instructor: S. Debolt&lt;br&gt;Location: TBA&lt;br&gt;Asst: TBA</td>
<td><strong>Class: SAT Verbal Prep</strong>&lt;br&gt;Instructor: A. Han&lt;br&gt;Location: TBA&lt;br&gt;Asst: TBA</td>
<td><strong>Class: SAT Math Prep</strong>&lt;br&gt;Instructor: T. Whelsky&lt;br&gt;Location: TBA&lt;br&gt;Asst: TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group A: Computers</strong>&lt;br&gt;Instructor: Generoso&lt;br&gt;Location: TBA&lt;br&gt;Asst: TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00-1:00</td>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1:05-2:20</td>
<td><strong>Class:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Instructor: TBA</td>
<td><strong>Class: Writing</strong>&lt;br&gt;Instructor: J. Raposo&lt;br&gt;Location: TBA&lt;br&gt;Asst: TBA</td>
<td><strong>Class:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Instructor: TBA&lt;br&gt;Location: TBA&lt;br&gt;Asst: TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 16</td>
<td>SENIORS only</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Check in Campion 232</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Help yourself to juice &amp; breakfast bar</td>
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<td>(kara has key to blackbox)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 – 10:00</td>
<td>Class: Advisory</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor: C. Green</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location: Campion 231</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 – 10:15</td>
<td>SAT prep opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Bowen</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location: Campion 231</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:15- 11:15</td>
<td>Class: Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor: K. Mitchell</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Location: Campion 231</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:15-12:00</td>
<td>Class: Art</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor: J. O'Connor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Location: Campion 231</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00-1:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 23rd</th>
<th>SOPHOMORES cancelled</th>
<th>JUNIORS cancelled</th>
<th>SENIORS - only</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Check in Campion 232</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Help yourself to juice &amp; breakfast bar</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 – 10:10</td>
<td>Class: Math</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Instructor: M. Egan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location: Campion 131</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:15 – 11:25</td>
<td>Class: Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor: K. Mitchell</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location: Campion 231</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class: Math</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor: M. Egan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location: Campion 236</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30- 1:00</td>
<td>Community Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location: Cushing 001 &amp; Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:05 – 2:00</td>
<td>Class: Advisory</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor: J. Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location: Campion 236</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class: Advisory</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor: C. Chen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Location: Campion 235</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HOLY CROSS visit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Depart 9:00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Arrive 1:30</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-12:00 tour</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12:00 meal ($5/student)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-2:00 discussion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Instructor: C. Green</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>SOPHOMORES</td>
<td>JUNIORS</td>
<td>SENIORS</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
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<td>Check in Campion 232</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 9:00 – 10:10          | Class: Math  
Instructor: M. Egan  
Location: Campion 131 | Class: Writing  
Instructor: K. Mitchell  
Location: Campion 231 |         |
| 10:15 – 11:25         | Class: Writing  
Instructor: K. Mitchell  
Location: Campion 231 | Class: Math  
Instructor: M. Egan  
Location: Campion 235 |         |
| 11:30 – 1:00          | Community Meeting  
Location: Cushing 001 & Lunch |         |         |
| 1:05 – 2:00           | Class: Advisory  
Instructor: J. Brown  
Location: Campion 235 | Class: Advisory  
Instructor: C. Chen  
Location: Campion 236 | Class: Writing  
Instructor: K. Mitchell  
Location: Campion 231 |
| 2:05-3:00             | Class: Science  
Instructor: T. Gay  
Location: Campion 235 |         | Class: Art  
Instructor: J. O'Connor  
Location: Campion 235 |

Student please note::
Boston College College Bound Program

2006-2007 Schedule

Are we doing the Kennedy library on this date?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>October 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>SOPHOMORES</th>
<th>JUNIORS</th>
<th>SENIORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 3:00</td>
<td>Buses pick up students, drop off at Kennedy Library &amp; Museum</td>
<td></td>
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Please note::
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>November 4th</th>
<th>SOPHOMORES</th>
<th>JUNIORS</th>
<th>SENIORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Check in Campion 232</td>
<td>Help yourself to juice &amp; breakfast bar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 – 10:10</td>
<td>Class: Math Instructor: M. Egan Location: Campion 131</td>
<td>Class: Writing Instructor: K. Mitchell Location: Campion 231</td>
<td>Class: Advisory Instructor: C. Green Location: Campion 236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 – 1:00</td>
<td>Community Meeting Location: Cushing 601 &amp; Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:05 – 2:00</td>
<td>Class: Advisory Instructor: J. Brown Location: Campion 235</td>
<td>Class: Advisory Instructor: C. Chen Location: Campion 236</td>
<td>Class: Writing Instructor: K. Mitchell Location: Campion 231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:05-3:00</td>
<td>Class: Science Instructor: T. Gay Location: Campion 236</td>
<td>Class: SAT prep (Juniors only) Instructor: C. Kotecki Location: Campion 235</td>
<td>Class: Art Instructor: J. O'Connor Location: Campion 231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Sophomores</th>
<th>Juniors</th>
<th>Seniors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 9:00  | Check in Campion 232  
      Help yourself to juice & breakfast bar | | |
| 9:00 – 10:10 | Class: Math  
Instructor: M. Egan  
Location: Campion 131 | Class: Writing  
Instructor: K. Mitchell  
Location: Campion 231 | Class: Advisory  
Instructor: C. Green  
Location: Campion 236 |
| 10:15 – 11:25 | Class: Writing  
Instructor: K. Mitchell  
Location: Campion 231 | Class: Math  
Instructor: M. Egan  
Location: Campion 235 | |
| 11:30 – 1:00 | | Community Meeting  
Location: Cushing 001 & Lunch | |
| 1:05 – 2:00 | Class: Advisory  
Instructor: J. Brown  
Location: Campion 235 | Class: Advisory  
Instructor: C. Chen  
Location: Campion 236 | Class: Writing  
Instructor: K. Mitchell  
Location: Campion 231 |
| 2:05 – 3:00 | Class: Science  
Instructor: T. Gay  
Location: Campion 236 | Class: SAT prep  
(Juniors only)  
Instructor: C. Kotecki  
Location: Campion 235 | Class: Art  
Instructor: J. O'Connor  
Location: Campion 231 |

Please note:
### Winter Celebration?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>December 9th</th>
<th>SOPHOMORES</th>
<th>JUNIORS</th>
<th>SENIORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Check in Campion 232</td>
<td>Help yourself to juice &amp; breakfast bar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 9:00 – 10:10 | Class: Math  
Instructor: M. Egan  
Location: Campion 131 | Class: Writing  
Instructor: K. Mitchell  
Location: Campion 231 | Class: Advisory  
Instructor: C. Green  
Location: Campion 236 |
| 10:15 – 11:25| Class: Writing  
Instructor: K. Mitchell  
Location: Campion 231 | Class: Math  
Instructor: M. Egan  
Location: Campion 235 |         |
| 11:30 – 1:00 | Community Meeting  
Location: Cushing 001 & Lunch | |         |
| 1:05 – 2:00  | Class: Advisory  
Instructor: J. Brown  
Location: Campion 235 | Class: Advisory  
Instructor: C. Chen  
Location: Campion 236 | Class: Writing  
Instructor: K. Mitchell  
Location: Campion 231 |
| 2:05 – 3:00  | Class: Science  
Instructor: T. Gay  
Location: Campion 236 | Class: SAT prep  
(Juniors only)  
Instructor: C. Kotecki  
Location: Campion 235 | Class: Art  
Instructor: J. O’Connor  
Location: Campion 231 |

Please note:
BOSTON COLLEGE SCHOOL
BOSTON COLLEGE COLLABORATIVE

Class of 2002 – 2003 - 2004

COLLEGE BOUND
STUDENT CONTRACT

I, ____________________________ promise to fulfill all of the commitments and requirements of the College Bound Program listed below:

1) I will attend every Saturday session of College Bound.
2) I will arrive promptly to all classes.
3) I will complete all outside assignments on time.
4) I will maintain an overall average of B or better in my high school classes at the end of each marking period.
5) I will have excellent attendance at both College Bound and my high school.
6) I will contact my high school guidance counselor and a College Bound counselor if I am having academic problems in a high school or College Bound course.

COLLEGE BOUND LEADERSHIP

1) I WILL FOLLOW ALL THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BOSTON COLLEGE, AND THE COLLEGE BOUND PROGRAM AS LISTED IN THE COLLEGE BOUND STUDENT HANDBOOK.

2) I will complete all work and participate in all school, college, and community activities with honesty and integrity.

3) I will assume a leadership role in my school, my community, and in College Bound, acting as a positive model for others.

   More specifically,
   a. I will engage in at least one activity each semester within my high school (i.e., participate in a club, sports, etc.).
   b. I will engage in at least one school-wide activity each semester (i.e., fund raiser, clean-up day, etc.).
   c. I will engage in at least one activity within my community (i.e., church, local clubs or sports groups, etc.) this year.

4) I will be actively involved in the Mentor Program.

   More specifically,
   a. I will talk to my mentor either in person or on the telephone at least once a month.
   b. I will meet with my mentor at least two times each semester.

Comments:—use reverse.

Signature of Student ____________________________ Date ____________

Signature of Parent/Guardian ____________________________ Date ____________

Signature of High School Contact ____________________________ Date ____________
Works Cited


City College of San Francisco. (2002). National Articulation and Transfer Network (NATN): Building an Alternative Pathway for Underserved Student Populations to Access Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HIS) & Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU).


College Bound Program (June, 2003). Boston College. Lynch School of Education.


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Kaba, M. (2000). They listen to me . . . but they don't act on it: Contradictory consciousness and student participation in decision making. *The High School Journal, 84*(2), 21-34.


*Let's ask the students...Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia students talk about schools and change* (1997). Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Charleston, West Virginia. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 415046)


*Mind the gaps: How college readiness narrows the achievement gaps in college success* (2010). Iowa City, IA: ACT.


