Support Underrepresented Students’ Academic Rigor

Webinar Presenter:
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Learning Outcomes:

After viewing this webinar, you should be able to:

• Identify possible barriers and protective factors related to underrepresented student populations and academic rigor.
• Discuss school counselors’ roles in promoting access and equity in academic rigor.
• Identify ways to support underrepresented students’ access to and persistence in academic rigor in your school counseling program and school.
Agenda

- Relevant Terms and Contexts
- Problems & Gaps
- Challenges and Supports
- Q&A
- Next Steps: Action Plan
- What School Counselors Can Do

Polling Question #1: Open Ended

What brought you to this webinar session, and what do you hope to get out of this experience?
Relevant Terms and Contexts

Terms to Know

• Academic Rigor
• Underrepresented Students
• Underserved Students
• Opportunity Gap
• Achievement Gap
• Excellence Gap
To Understand, Support, and Advocate for Underrepresented Students

School counselors can understand the following elements:

• Benefits of Academic Rigor
• Experiences of Underrepresented Students
• Roles of School Counselors

Benefits of Academic Rigor

College and Career Readiness

Social and Emotional Benefits
Experiences of Underrepresented Students

- Racial and Ethnic Minorities
- Low SES
- STEM
- Students with Disabilities
- English Language Learners
- Geographic Locations
- And more...

Roles of School Counselors

- School Counselors as Bridges
- School Counselors as Potential Barriers and Impeded by Barriers
Problems & Gaps

Underrepresented students continue to be underprepared and underserved.

The disproportionality of access and success in rigor contributes to further widening of the achievement, excellence, and opportunity gaps.

Previous focus on underrepresented students have been deficit-focused, which calls for strengths-based perspectives.

Specific strategies are needed to inform how school counselors can effectively advocate for underrepresented students to enhance access and equity in academic rigor.
Polling Question #2: Multiple Choice

What is your level of competence in understanding, supporting, and advocating for underrepresented students as it relates to academic rigor in your school?

a. None, but that’s why I’d like to learn.
b. Very little, but I would like to learn more.
c. Some, but I would like to learn more.
d. A lot, but I am open to learning more.
e. Expert, but I am still open to learning more.
Challenges

Underrepresented high school students experience barriers in accessing and persisting in academic rigor.

Academic Barriers

Emotional and Social Barriers

Cultural Barriers

Systemic Barriers

Academic Barriers

Academic Under-preparedness

Access to Rigor

Access to Qualified Teachers
Emotional and Social Barriers

- Isolation and Tokenization
- Social Supports
- Family Support
- Financial Barriers

Cultural Barriers

- Cultural Capital
- Lack of Information
- Cultural Competence of Educators
Systemic Barriers

- Process of Identifying Students for Rigor
- Student Populations and School Size
- Academic Tracking Policies
- Societal Injustices

Challenges

- Academic Barriers
  - Academic Under-preparedness
  - Access to Rigor
  - Access to Qualified Teachers
- Emotional and Social Barriers
  - Isolation and Tokenization
  - Social Supports
  - Family Support
  - Financial Barriers
- Cultural Barriers
  - Cultural Capital
  - Lack of Information
  - Cultural Competence of Educators
- Systemic Barriers
  - Process of Identifying Students for Academic Rigor
  - Student Populations and School Size
  - Academic Tracking Policies
  - Societal Injustices
Protective Factors

Research reported protective factors, or assets, that support underrepresented students’ experiences in academic rigor.

Access to Rigor  Culturally Sensitive Teaching Practices  Personal Connections  Systemic Supports

Polling Question #3: Open-Ended

If not already mentioned, what are other barriers as well as protective factors that you’ve observed regarding underrepresented students’ access to and persistence in academic rigor in your school?
What School Counselors Can Do

How School Counselors Can Enhance Access and Equity in Academic Rigor for Underrepresented Students
School Counselors as Advocates

Advocacy Through School Counseling Interventions

Advocacy Through Data

Advocacy for Students

Advocacy for Families

School Counselors as Collaborators

Outside the School

Inside the School
School Counselors as Leaders

School-Based Professional Development Initiatives

Program Development

Initiatives to Promote Professional Identity Development

School Counselors Impacting Systemic Change

Promote Policies That Impact All Students

Remove Barriers to Academic Rigor

Promote a College-Going Culture and Climate
Next Steps: What is your action plan?

Next Steps for Taking Action

- Begin with yourself.
- Go beyond the school.
- Look at the data.
- Intervene at the school level.
Further Readings


Contact Information

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Questions?

Thank you for your time and participation! 😊
Suggested Action Plan & Next Steps to Enhance Access and Equity in Academic Rigor for Underrepresented Students in Your School

**Begin With Yourself**
- Engage in self-reflection of own school counseling program and practices.
- Consider the gaps of services and interventions in the school counseling program.
- Reflect upon your own multicultural competence, and be cognizant of biases.
- Reflect upon how the school counseling program and practices contribute to and break down barriers for underrepresented students and families.

**Look at the Data**
- Disaggregate data.
- Make formal and informal observations.
- Identify the underrepresented student populations served at your school.
- Note the disproportionalities, gaps, and barriers in the school’s achievement, attainment, and access data.
- Conduct needs assessments to collect new data.
- Consider conspicuous as well as hidden gaps and practices that further marginalize underrepresented students and families.

**Intervene at the School Level**
- Join and inform your school’s leadership team.
- Collaboratively discuss gaps and inequitable practices and policies (e.g., gatekeeping and tracking) in your school.
- Brainstorm potential ideas and consult to determine resources and interventions.
- Lead and advocate for culturally sensitive practices for staff and changes to school policies.
- Enhance students’ sense of mattering and belonging.
- Communicate high expectations for all students and promote a college-going culture.

**Go Beyond the School**
- Consider achievement, excellence, and opportunity gaps connected to district, state, or federal policies (or lack thereof).
- Strengthen and leverage school-family-community partnerships.
- Include families’ perspectives and needs, and implement interventions to close information gaps.
- Empower students to use their voices to advocate for change.