Ramp-Up Implementation Study
March Interview Protocol

Introduction and Welcome (5 min.)

Hello, my name is **[fill in name]**. Thank you for speaking with me today.

I am from **the Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory.** REL Midwest is conducting these interviews as part of our study of the Ramp-Up to Readiness intervention, a study in which your school is participating. Today, we want to better understand the programs, services, activities, and resources that **[fill in name of high school]** provides to students to prepare them for college. Although students may pursue a variety of pathways after high school, the questions for today focus on the types of supports that high schools offer to help students pursue college; by "college," we mean a two-year college, four-year college or university, community college, or career technical college. This information will become part of a study report describing the college-readiness supports provided by high schools.

We've estimated that this interview group will take one hour. During this hour, we will discuss a number of topics related to preparing students for college. Please respond to the questions based on your experiences and programming at **[fill in name of high school]**.

Consent

All data being collected will be kept confidential by REL Midwest and American Institutes for Research. You have the right to discontinue your participation in this data collection process at any time without consequences.

Confidentiality

Let me just highlight one issue that is discussed in the consent form. It is impossible to write down everything that you say today, so I would like to record the interview so that I can go back and listen to the discussion to make sure I recorded your statements accurately. Anything that is discussed will remain confidential. The audiorecordings will be transcribed and then erased. We will not identify any interviewees or other individuals in the transcriptions.

Are there any questions before we begin?

> **Notes to interviewer:** The purposes of this interview are to (1) understand what college-readiness supports are available in the high school; and (2) understand the frequency, intensity, and accessibility of the identified college-readiness supports.

Background Information

Today, we'd like to hear about any programs, services, activities, and resources that **[fill in name of high school]** offers to help students prepare for college.

Questions About College-Access or College-Readiness Programs (5 minutes)

1. What formal college-access or -readiness programs, if any, does *[fill in name of high school]* offer to students to help them prepare for college? By formal programs, I mean programs developed by local, regional, or national organizations that are often (but not always) targeted at a select group of students. These could include programs such as Upward Bound, College Possible, or AVID.

   [Probe for each program identified:
   a. *What kinds of students are eligible to participate (i.e., grade-level, level of academic achievement, demographic characteristics)?*
   b. *How many students who are eligible to participate actually do participate (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?]*

2. Are there any college-access or -readiness programs offered to everyone in the school?

Questions About College-Access Services, Activities, and Resources

The next set of questions will ask about any school services, activities, and resources offered outside of the programs that we just discussed to help prepare students for college.

A. Questions About Academic Readiness (15 minutes)

First, let's talk about any services, activities, and resources that **[fill in name of high school]** offers to help students prepare to succeed in first-year, nonremedial, college classes.

3. Do students have the opportunity to take college-level courses?
   [*Probe:*
   a. *Dual-credit, AP, IB, or College in the Schools classes?*
   b. *What kinds of students are eligible to participate (i.e., which grade levels, those with a specific level of academic achievement)?*]

4. Do students have the opportunity to take honors courses?

[*Probe:*

    a. *In what subjects are honors courses offered?*

    b. *What kinds of students are eligible to participate (i.e., which grade levels, those with a specific level of academic achievement)?]*

5. How are students encouraged to take college-level or honors courses?

6. Does **[fill in name of high school]** provide feedback to students about whether they are on track academically for college?

[*Probe if yes:*

    a. *Who receives feedback (e.g., all seniors, freshmen who have failed a class)?*

    b. *In what format do students receive feedback (e.g., discussions with a teacher or counselor, written information sent home)?*

    c. *How often do students receive feedback (e.g., annually in a meeting with a counselor, after key milestones such as taking the PLAN)?]*

7. Does **[fill in name of high school]** offer workshops or classes for students to develop study or note-taking skills?

[*Probe if yes:*

    a. *When do these workshops or classes take place (month, time of the day, multiple times over the school year)?*

    b. *Who is invited (e.g., juniors, seniors, parents)?*

    c. *How many of the invitees actually attend (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?]*

[*Probe if no: Do teachers discuss study or note-taking skills in their classes?*]

8. What percentage of students who graduate from **[fill in name of high school]** are prepared academically to succeed in nonremedial college classes *(i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)*?

[*Probe:*

    a. *For students who are prepared, what do you attribute students' preparedness to?*

    b. *Which students are not prepared?]*

B. Questions About Admissions Readiness (15 minutes)

Next, let's talk about the kinds of services, activities, or resources that **[fill in name of high school]** offers to help students identify and complete the admissions requirements for a college that matches their goals, interests, and abilities.

9. How do students at **[fill in name of high school]** learn about the variety of colleges that exist, differences in their admissions requirements, and differences in their application processes?

   [*Probe:*

   a. *College fairs (e.g., at the school or school-organized field trips to fairs outside of the school)? Who participates (e.g., sophomores, juniors)? How many students participate (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?*

   b. *College representatives visiting the high school? Who participates (e.g., sophomores, juniors, high-achieving students)? How many students participate (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?*

   c. *Student visits to college campuses (clarify if those are sponsored by the school)? If visits are school sponsored, who participates (e.g., sophomores, juniors, high-achieving students, low-SES students)? How many students participate (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?]*

10. Do students at **[fill in name of high school]** complete an individualized postsecondary plan that specifies the coursework and activities necessary to meet admissions requirements at a college matching their goals, interests, and abilities?

[Probe if yes:

   a. *When do students first create the plan (e.g., freshman year)?*

   b. *How often is it updated (e.g., annually)?*

   c. *Who is involved in creating the plan (e.g., counselor, teachers, parents)?*

   d. *How many students have such a plan (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?]*

11. What kinds of help, if any, does **[fill in name of high school]** provide students for finding a college that matches their goals, interests, and abilities?

[Probe: Individual meetings with a counselor, general information presented in a large group, workshops for selecting colleges to consider?]

12. Do students receive any school help with completing steps in the application process, such as taking college admissions exams, writing college essays, or completing college applications?

[Probe:

   a. *Do seniors receive assistance with college applications individually or in small groups? How many seniors take advantage of such assistance (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)? Are students required to complete a certain number of college applications?*

   b. *Does someone (e.g., a counselor or teacher) review college applications? What is reviewed (e.g., college essays, checked for completion)? How many seniors take advantage of such assistance (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?*

   c. *Are students required to write a college essay (e.g., in their English class)?*

    d. *Does [fill in name of high school] offer classes or workshops to prepare students for college entrance exams such as the ACT? Who is eligible to attend? How many eligible students attend (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?]*

13. Does **[fill in name of high school]** take any steps to monitor students' completion of key enrollment steps, such as taking college admissions exams or completing college applications?

[If yes, probe:

    a. *Which enrollment steps are monitored?*

    b. *Does the school contact students if they have not completed key enrollment steps, such as completing a college application, by the end of senior year?]*

14. Do students at **[fill in name of high school]** use college software, such as Naviance or the Minnesota Career Information System (MCIS), to organize their college planning and application process?

[If yes, probe:

    a. *When do students learn about this software (e.g., freshman year, junior year)?*

    b. *How many students actively (more than just having a login) use the software (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?]*

15. To what extent do students here at **[fill in name of high school]** who are planning to attend college take the necessary steps to enroll?

C. Questions About Career Readiness (5 minutes)

Now, let's talk about the kinds of services, activities, or resources that **[fill in name of high school]** offers to help students understand what types of jobs might be a good match for their interests and abilities.

16. Do students at **[fill in name of high school]** receive any information about careers, such as their educational and skill requirements and earnings payoffs?

  [*If yes, probe:*

  How do they receive this information (e.g., written materials provided, website recommendations provided, in workshops or an advisory)?]

17. Does **[fill in name of high school]** offer any kinds of career exploration activities *(e.g., job shadowing, help in finding internships, speakers who discuss careers, help writing a resume, career interest inventory, ACT's World-of-Work map)*?

  [*Probe for each key activity named, where key reflects the emphasis placed on it by focus group members:*

    a. *If unclear, clarify the format of the activity (e.g., one-on-one assistance, hands-on workshop, informational session, written information)?*

    b. When does this activity occur (month, time of the day, multiple times over the school year)?

    c. Who is invited to participate (e.g., juniors, seniors, parents)?

    d. How many of the invitees participate (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?]

18. To what extent do students here at **[fill in name of high school]** understand the requirements of different careers and which will match their personal goals and abilities?

D. Questions About Financial Readiness (10 minutes)

Now, let's talk about the kinds of services, activities, or resources that **[fill in name of high school]** offers to help students prepare to pay for college.

19. Does **[fill in name of high school]** offer a "financial aid night" or similar information session to students and families?

    [*If yes, probe:*

    a. When is that offered (month, time of the day, multiple times over the school year)?

    b. Who is invited (e.g., juniors, seniors)?

    c. How many of the invited students and families attend (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?

    d. What are the main topics covered?]

20. Do counselors or other school staff ever meet individually with students and/or their families to discuss different strategies for paying for college (e.g., savings, loans, scholarships, financial aid)?

    [If yes, probe:

    a. Who meets with students (e.g., counselor, school staff, volunteer parent or local college student, peer counselor, representatives from an educational agency)?

    b. When do these meetings take place (month, time of the day, multiple times over the school year, in the summer after high school graduation)?

    c. How many seniors and/or their families meet individually with a counselor (or other knowledgeable individual) to talk about paying for college?

    d. Do counselors help seniors and/or their families to obtain a FAFSA PIN or complete the FAFSA form?]

21. Does **[fill in name of high school]** offer any workshops or classes related to paying for college, such as workshops about completing the FAFSA application, searching for scholarships, or completing scholarship applications?

    [*Probe for each workshop:*

    a. What topics are covered?

       b. When do these meetings take place (month, time of the day, multiple times over the school year, in the summer after high school graduation)?

       c. Who is invited (e.g., juniors, seniors, parents)?

       d. How many of the invited students and/or parents attend (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?

22. Are there other resources that **[fill in name of high school]** offers students for figuring out how to pay for college (e.g., a list of recommended websites to search for scholarship information)?

23. Does **[fill in name of high school]** take any steps to monitor students' completion of the FAFSA or scholarship applications?

[Probe if yes: Does the school contact students if they have not completed the FAFSA or scholarship applications by the end of senior year?]

E. Questions About Personal/Social Readiness (5 minutes)

Next, let's discuss the kinds of services, activities, or resources that **[fill in name of high school]** offers to help students set educational goals, make progress towards those goals, and create relationships with peers and adults to support achieving those goals.

24. To what extent do students graduating from **[fill in name of high school]** have the personal and social skills necessary for succeeding in college? Such skills could include, for example, goal setting, monitoring progress towards goals, persisting in the face of obstacles, help-seeking behavior, or time management)?

25. Are there any services, activities, or resources that **[fill in name of high school]** offers to help students develop personal and social skills to succeed at college?

    [Probe:

    a. What are these services, activities, and resources?

    b. What skills do they address?

    c. For any key activities described:

       i. When do these activities take place (month, time of the day, multiple times over the school year, in the summer after high school graduation)?

       ii. Who is invited (e.g., juniors, seniors, parents)?

       iii. How many invited students participate (i.e., all, most, half, some, hardly any)?

F. Questions About College-Going Culture (10 minutes)

Now, let's talk about the goals and expectations of school staff, parents, and students attending this school.

26. To what extent do teachers, counselors, and administrators share a common goal to prepare all students for college?*[1]

27. To what extent are teachers expected to provide assistance to students in planning for college?

28. Do school staff communicate with parents/guardians about their children's readiness for college?

    [Probe if yes:

    a. *What is the format of these communications (e.g., one-way versus two-way conversation)?*

    b. *How often does this communication occur?*

    c. *Which families are reached with this communication?]*

29. To what extent do students see themselves succeeding at college?

30. To what extent do students understand what it takes (academically, financially, and personally) to succeed in college?

31. To what extent do students take the appropriate actions to make their postsecondary plans a reality?

32. Who at [**name of high school**] is responsible for delivering college-related programs, services, activities, and resources to students?

G. Questions About Barriers to Implementing a Schoolwide College Readiness Program (10 minutes)

Finally, let's talk about implementing a schoolwide college readiness program.

33. What educational initiatives, if any, has [**name of high school**] been involved in implementing this year?

    [Clarify:

    a. *Is this initiative school-wide? What is the format of these communications (e.g., one-way versus two-way conversation)?*

    b. *[If this is an early implementing school] Are staff able to successfully implement more than one initiative at a time?*

    c. *[If this is a late implementing school] Do you foresee any barriers to implementing a schoolwide college-readiness initiative next year?]*

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me today!

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[1] An * indicates that this question is based on a question included on a survey from the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota.