

Promising Practices Capture Sheet

School: Pearl Cohn High School

District: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Practice: Preparing students for the ACT

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Rural Suburban Urban

■ Region: Mid-Cumberland

Connection to Strategic Plan:

Goals:	<i>State Average of 21 Composite ACT</i>	<i>55% of the class of 2020 obtains postsecondary credential</i>
How best practice addresses:	Pearl Cohn recognizes that success on the ACT is not going to occur through a prep class alone but requires strong academic instruction and student motivation to succeed on the ACT. The staff at Pearl Cohn have therefore implemented a holistic suite of supports to help prepare students for success. Students are provided remediation, strong core instruction, early postsecondary coursework, and knowledge and exposure to postsecondary options. The school culture is built and reinforced through a set of core values.	Many Pearl Cohn graduates were walking across the stage with every intention of matriculating to postsecondary. Yet, at the start of school, Cohn staff members were getting discouraging reports that many former students weren't actually enrolling. In order to address this "summer melt", Cohn committed to re-evaluate how they were supporting students through the bridge to postsecondary. This year, Pearl Cohn is planning on implementing a series of text message "nudges" over the summer and to offer more school-sponsored events to help students prepare for "what college is really like."
Priority Areas:	<i>High School Bridge to Postsecondary</i>	<i>All Means All</i>
How best practice applies:	Beyond academic preparedness, students need to possess certain beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge to be <i>ready</i> for postsecondary. Pearl Cohn is shifting its practices to address the specific needs of their students regarding their readiness for postsecondary.	Pearl Cohn serves a predominantly low-income, underrepresented student population. Because TN Promise greatly reduces the financial burden of postsecondary education, all Pearl Cohn seniors are expected to participate in TN Promise.



Practices:

- Culture
- Accountability
- Funding
- Instructional
- Programmatic
- Other:
- Training/PD
- Policy Change

Project Specific Indicators:

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Results:

- Increased student achievement results
 - ACT TNReady/EOC/TVAAS NIC EPS
- Decreased remediation and/or subgroup gaps
- Increased student readiness results (non-academic)
- Increased partnerships / alignment
- Increased participation / program growth

The Challenge:

Pearl Cohn is a majority minority school with 90.9 percent economically disadvantaged students. Historically, attending postsecondary has not been an expectation for students in this community. However, Pearl Cohn’s intentional efforts are starting to change that narrative.

According to TVAAS data, only 21 percent of the incoming freshman in 2015 are projected to be proficient or advanced on their EOC. This striking data highlights the importance of strengthening the basic reading, ELA, and math skills for all students entering Pearl Cohn.

The Vision:

Pearl Cohn’s vision is centered on their five core values which they believe students must exemplify to be successful:

- More Grit (Resilience)
- Own it (Personal Responsibility/Accountability)
- Others first (Kindness, generosity)
- No limits (High expectations, no excuses)
- Answer the call (Be your best)

Intentionally created in student-focused language, the core values are used in daily conversations and proudly displayed throughout the school.

Principal Stewart believes that setting students’ trajectories towards college and career success requires a holistic approach that incorporates both students’ academic and social-emotional skills.

Summary of To-Do's:

- Collectively define "What do we want to be true for our students?" and synthesize them into core values
- Integrate the core values into teacher professional development and daily conversations with students
- Partner with local non-profits to support students' postsecondary readiness (Pearl Cohn partners with Gear Up and the Oasis Center)
- Implement an advisory time ("The Nest") for students to build strong internal support systems and be able to open up about their experiences
- Set an expectation that all seniors sign up for Tennessee Promise
- Expose students to postsecondary options through partnerships with a local community college and field trips to other local institutions
- Implement a series of summer text nudges to help support matriculation into postsecondary

Lessons Learned:

- Teachers who can build relationships are the teachers who should be trained to implement RTI² and ACT prep courses. When working with high school students who are severely behind, motivation and respect are integral parts of success.
- If an ACT prep course isn't working, change it. If an outside company is coming into teach the class, they need to be familiar with the needs of your students. Pearl Cohn switched from an outside facilitator to a technology-based tool that could be implemented using their own teachers.
- Students' intended postsecondary plans can be derailed in the gap between graduation and postsecondary enrollment; students need continued support over the summer to help them persevere to matriculation.

Communications:

Pearl Cohn's text message strategy will depend on strong relationships and communication.

Stakeholder Management:

Due to the large number of students who enter Pearl Cohn performing significantly below grade level, PCHS has implemented a multi-tiered system of supports to address students' skill deficits (RTI²). Aligned to the core value "Own it", teachers have candid conversations with students about their knowledge and skill gaps when they enter high school. Having these "real" conversations empowers students to confront their knowledge gaps and work to eliminate them.

Metrics & Measurements:

Baseline Data	Progress to Date	Goals
ACT Composite 2011 - 15 2012 - 14.7 2013 - 14.9 2014 - 15.1 2016 - 15.6	In 2015, Pearl Cohn saw gains in 6 out of the 7 end of course assessments. ACT increased by half a point (0.5) from 2014 to 2015 with 39 more students tested than the year before.	Pearl Cohn has the immediate goal of growing one point a year on the ACT. By doing so, their long-term goal is to be on track to achieve an average 21 composite by 2020, aligning them with the statewide goal.

Resources:

- [NPR article](#): One Nashville High School is Tracking Down Every Senior to Sign Up for Tennessee Promise