

# Cambrian Academy: A college-going culture

**A college-going culture builds the expectation of postsecondary education for all students—not just the best students.** It inspires the best in every student, and it supports students in achieving their goals. As you can imagine, the key ingredient in creating a college-going culture is a dedicated team of educators.

## Why Have a College-Going Culture?

If there is any doubt about the benefits of a college-going culture, the most current Bureau of Labor Statistics demonstrate the importance of a college education:

- A person with a Ph.D. earns an average of \$1,214 a week.
- A person with a master's degree earns an average of \$1,174 a week.
- A person with a bachelor's degree earns an average of \$983 a week.
- A person with an associate degree earns an average of \$834 a week.
- Unfortunately, a person with only a high school diploma earns an average of \$507 a week.

If those statistics don't catch your students' eyes, these will:

- Currently 0.9 percent of people with a Ph.D., 1.6 percent of people with a master's degree, and 1.8 percent of people with a bachelor's degree are unemployed. Those with just a high school education have a 3.5 percent rate of unemployment.

Getting a college education cuts one's chances of being unemployed roughly in half.

- Half of all college students attend community colleges because they are affordable, close to home, do not require an extensive application process, and can serve as a transition step to a bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, only 1 in 10 students actually transfers and successfully completes that bachelor's degree.

Why is it necessary to encourage a college-going culture? The shocking fact is that very few students are likely to complete even an associate degree:

- For every 100 students in the United States who begin ninth grade, 67 of them will finish high school in four years, 38 will go to college, and only 18 will earn associate degrees within three years or bachelor's degrees in six years.

These statistics are not surprising for those of us who know how important a college education is in order to have a life of options rather than a life of limitations.

Students who have the parental, school, and community expectations that college is the next step after high school see **college as the norm**. However, the idea that college is the next step after high school may seem unrealistic for those students who are from one or more of the following groups: low achievers, middle to low-income levels, underrepresented minorities, disabled youth, and families where no one has attended college before.

In fact, to many students regardless of their background, merely graduating high school is a challenge. Studies have found that students who are from the groups mentioned above are more likely to face college planning obstacles because of social and language barriers, less access to information and guidance, less exploration because of low expectations, decreased access to the Internet, and underestimation of the amount of financial help available.

**The result is that the education gap in our country increases.**

According to the Pathways to College Network, a national organization committed to creating a college-going culture, "Of high school graduates, those from high-income families enter college at rates 25 percent higher than those from low-income families."

**Cambrian Academy educators are dedicating their energies to balancing this percentage.**

Educators at high schools across the country see the current trends toward the necessity of college, evaluate their students, and ask: How do we make our school and our community one where students are **expected** to attend college? This is the first and most crucial question of any school desiring to shift its school's culture to a college-going culture, where students appreciate academics, have a desire to succeed and a drive to attend college, and become lifelong learners.

