

Module 004:

Improving College & Career Readiness

Leadership & Equity Strand
District Level
Prince George's County, MD

Overview

Based on a case in Prince George's County, MD, this module's simulation tasks leaders with addressing long-standing issues of equity across the community's racial and language divides. Leaders will collaborate to reform college and career readiness programs for this urban district while also managing the media and contemplating issues of grant management.

Key Skills Developed

- Defining College & Career Readiness (Equity Lens)
- Planning for Grant Funding (Strategic Thinking)
- Collaborative Decision-Making

Leadership Tools & Assessments

- Intercultural Development Index (IDI)
- College & Career Program Plan

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (ISLLC 2015)

- 1) Mission, Vision, and Core Values
- 3) Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
- 4) Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- 9) Operations and Management

Case Background



President Barack Obama meets with students working in a biomedical sciences classroom at Bladensburg High School in Bladensburg, Maryland, April 7, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

Prince George's County Receives \$7 Million to Scale Up Innovative College & Career Readiness Programming

Prince George's County Public Schools are in dire need of financial support from both public (county, state, federal) and private funding sources. For decades residents have resisted increases to in funding the county schools; as a result school district, county, and state leaders have struggled to adequately fund the public schools.

In 2014, the district received news that the district had been selected by the U.S. Department of Education to launch a Youth CareerConnect Program (PGC-YCCP) with a \$7 million dollars in federal grant funding. During President Obama's

tenure in office, he has called for a comprehensive effort to rethink and redesign the high school experience in American schools. The Department of Education challenged schools to scale up innovative models that personalize teaching and learning so that students could stay on track to graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and in careers.

One high school in the district offers several career academies with high school curricula aligned with college-level entrance requirements for Maryland's state university system. Through a collaborative effort with community partners, the school expanded the capacity of its Health & Biosciences Academy to better prepare more students for one of the region's highest growth industries. Students at the school who concentrate in health professions are now able to earn industry-recognized certifications in the fields of nursing and pharmacy, and biomedical students can earn college credit from the University of Maryland Baltimore County and the Rochester Institute of Technology.

Through the federally funded YCC grant program, students now have access to individualized career and college counseling designed to improve the attainment of industry-recognized credentials and preparation for college-level course work. Students also have the ability to receive postsecondary credit while still in high school and have access to paid work experiences with employer partners.

Overall, the PGC-YCCP aims to help prepare 2,500 graduates at its high school across the county to succeed academically and graduate career-ready in the high-demand fields of information technology and healthcare each year.

Under the US DOE program, Youth CareerConnect schools seek to strengthen America's talent pipeline by supporting stronger high school, postsecondary, workforce investment system, and employer partnerships that deliver:

- Robust Employer Engagement & Work-Based Learning
- A Focus on High-Demand Industries, Including STEM
- Integration of Post-secondary Education and Training

[\[Video: Opportunity for All Access to Career Skills and College-Level\]](#)

The County's Academic Stagnation

With more than 127,000 students, Prince George's County Public Schools is the second-largest school system in the state of Maryland and ranked number 21 among the largest school districts in the United States in 2013.

Even with an annual operating budget of approximately \$1.88 billion, inclusive of federal, state, and private grant funding, the district remains challenged by its positioning in the bottom quartile of student performance within the state of Maryland. Particularly alarming for the district is declining academic performance in a number of critical areas including Elementary and Middle school student performance in reading and mathematics that remains volatile notwithstanding small pockets of sporadic increases reported year over year. See 2015 PARCC achievement data in [ELA](#) and [Mathematics](#).

Additionally the persistent underperformance of SPED and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, who represent a significant and growing presence within the overall student population, is of major concern. Currently, SPED students represent 11.3% and LEP students represent 14.6% of the school system's population. Not only do these two subgroups perform at levels considerably below students overall, but the performance gaps expand substantially at each successive level of schooling. [Assessment data](#) for the district is current and readily available to the public.

Despite these challenges, the district highlights its great teachers and staff, including a growing number of teachers with National Board Certification; a curriculum aligned to Maryland's College and Career Ready Standards and 21st century academic skills and competencies; strong Career Academy and Career Technical Education programs; an expansive portfolio of community-based partnerships; innovative programs; and close relationship and proximity to major colleges and universities.

Additional strengths are declining dropout rates and record increases in four-year graduation rates. Graduation rates are rising among almost all student subgroups (e.g., Hispanic/Latino, African-American, and students receiving Special Education (SPED) services or participating in the Free and Reduced Meal (FARMS) program).

The district leaders assert that leveraging the district’s strengths, embracing new and proven strategies, and building a culture of excellence are at the heart of its strategic approach.

Funding for Controversial Newcomer High Schools



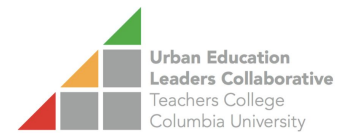
Photo Credit: Amy Davis, Baltimore Sun

Alongside recurring and vitriolic national political news cycles focused on immigration policy in the United States, the Prince George’s County has chosen to partner with legislators and the advocacy group [CASA de Maryland](#) to support college and career readiness for a specific group of high school students least likely to succeed in American city high schools: immigrant teens.

In 2015, with a three million dollar grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, two newcomer high schools opened in the district, each began with 100 ninth grade students. The schools were modeled on the [Internationals Network for Public Schools](#)’ assets-approach to educating English learners in high schools and

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Participant Case Overview



preparing them for [college](#) and careers. By design, the schools support student learning in a heterogeneous, learner-centered, collaborative, and activity-based environment. Students are organized in diverse clusters that work with the same team of teachers over 1-2 years. Within in this model, classes are mixed according to age, grade, academic ability, prior schooling, native language, and linguistic proficiency and are meant to be interdisciplinary and rigorous, with the curriculum including literature, social studies, math, science, the arts, technology, and physical education. Additionally, this approach, rather than creating new schools, creates academies for newcomers within a larger school.

With the emergence of the international high school approach came much controversy in the community.

[Audio Link: [Prince George's County Opening Special Schools for English Language Learners](#)]