

EXPLORING PARENTS' AND THEIR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS'  
UNDERSTANDING AND PERSPECTIVES ABOUT  
COLLEGE PREPARATION KNOWLEDGE

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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by  
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August 2010

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## **ABSTRACT**

Title: Exploring Parents' and their High School Students' Understanding and Perspectives about College Preparation Knowledge

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This research investigated high school students, their parents, and high school counselors self-reported views about the nature and relative importance of different aspects of “College Preparation Knowledge.” In brief, this research investigated many areas of College Preparation Knowledge (CPK) broadly defined as the facts and the processes needed to be known to be prepared to successfully apply, attend, and graduate from college. Practical suggestions derived from the research findings may help the high school counselor better serve their college-bound students and parents.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### *Statement of the Problem*

College preparation is considered to be a major developmental task of many high school students and their parents (College Board, 2007). In college preparation and other parenting tasks, parents need to guide their high school students by knowledgeably setting high expectations for achievement while balancing this with a supportive, emotionally warm, and caring family/home environment (Steinberg, 2001). Parental “College Preparation Knowledge” is best viewed as the degree of understanding that parents have of the “facts” of college preparation. (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2005).

For the purpose of this dissertation, College Preparation Knowledge is defined as the facts and processes--including both those discrete areas of college preparation and the specific items in those areas--that incorporates what needs to be known by parents and their children in the college preparation process. CPK of parents and their high school children, both in breadth and depth, may lead to higher percentages of students entering college, possibly enhancing collegiate success, and potentially increasing the college graduation rates of students.

Many parents may understandably have significant difficulties in guiding their high school students to the successful completion of college when they themselves may not know what it takes to get to that destination. To that end, the major goal of this research is to examine high school students’ and their parents’ self-reported views about the nature and relative importance of different aspects of this College Preparation Knowledge (CPK). The particular CPK topics were selected on the basis of previous research and professional literature

discussions of these matters and my professional experience as a school counselor on the high school and college levels.

A significant degree of an individual's long-term career prospects, standard of living, and life direction, are substantively dependent on making good decisions concerning college preparation and planning during the high school years. Parents have a critical role in preparing high school students for the college years. In a globally competitive environment, where educational opportunity and achievement are among the primary factors creating, reinforcing, and increasing socio-economic conditions, it is essential to think about how the United States can potentially enhance college attendance and graduation rates, both for the individual and collective good (McDonough, 2004).

#### *Purpose of the Study*

Research shows that the high school years are the most important in terms of preparation for college (College Board, 2007). High school students' cognitive, emotional, and social maturation potentially enable them to assume more responsibility and freedom in regard to choices they make and the goals they have set for themselves. Yet, high school students typically lack the expertise and experience to know how to gain appropriate and accurate resources for college preparation and to predict how potential decisions may play out over time. As such, authoritative parental knowledge of CPK--a foundation for parental guidance of high school students' educational and career development--is very important.

As such the major purpose of the present research is to examine parents' and high school students': (a) self-reported views about their understanding of the nature of CPK; (b) their self-reported beliefs about the relative importance of CPK; and, (c) to ascertain how parents and their

students compare to high school counselors in the items/areas of CPK that they perceive to be important.

It is generally believed that parents and students may differ in the extent of their CPK. Various comments have been made about the nature of parents' CPK. Various ideas have been stated about how parents might differ regarding CPK. Parents who have attended and/or graduated from college are thought to have more familiarity with CPK as well as to have more financial, educational, and cultural capital that they are able to pass along to their children than those parents who did not attend and graduate from college (Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2004).

This variable, the extent of parental CPK, might substantially influence the academic success and college attendance rates of high school students. The absence of high percentages of parent college graduation rates in many communities may lead to situations where high school students lack sufficient means to gain CPK. High school counselors should play an important compensatory role in the development of this parent and high school student CPK (Hugo, 2004).

Because some parents may also lack an understanding of how to prioritize CPK in terms of importance, this may put potential first-generation college students at-risk. Specifically: (a) These students may not be able to access the appropriate levels and crucial types of CPK; and (b) These students cannot act on this CPK, in collaboration with their parents, to make more accurate and potentially more effective decisions in the college preparation process to the same degree as parents who do have this CPK. Even parents who have graduated from college might need assistance from outside parties to develop and follow through on a post-secondary plan for their child.

## *Research Questions*

1) What views do parents and students have about the importance of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire? What are the views of parents and high school students about their self-perceived understanding of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire?

2) How do parents and their high school students differ in the self-perceived importance of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire? How do parents and their high school students differ in their understanding and rankings of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire? In more detail, the questions are as follows: (a) Is the self-perceived importance of these areas/items of the CPK questionnaire significantly different between parents who are college graduates versus those parents who are not college graduates? ; (b) Is the ranking in terms of understanding of these areas/items of the CPK questionnaire significantly different between parents who are college graduates versus those parents who are not college graduates? ; (c) Is the self-perceived importance of these areas/items of the CPK questionnaire significantly different between students whose parents are college graduates versus those whose parents are not college graduates? ; and (d) Is the ranking of understanding of the CPK questionnaire areas/items significantly different between students whose parents are college graduates versus those whose parents are not college graduates?

3) How do the school counselor's rankings of the importance of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire differ compared to: a) Parents' importance rankings of the items/areas of the CPK questionnaire? ; and b) high school students' importance rankings of the areas/items of the CPK

questionnaire? Are the parents who are college graduates and their high school students more similar to the school counselors in their ranking of importance of the CPK questionnaire areas/items than the parents who are not college graduates and their children?

### *Theoretical Perspective*

The pervasive influence, both positive and negative, of parenting on high school students' psychological growth, emotional well-being, high academic achievement, and pro-social development is supported in numerous research studies (Steinberg, 2001). Fostering college preparation of high school students is typically a primary and important task of parents. The research supports the understanding that parents need to provide support, set expectation, and collaborate with their high school children in addressing college preparation issues. The CPK questionnaire may be one framework for such discussion and dialogue to take place.

### *Delimitations of the Study*

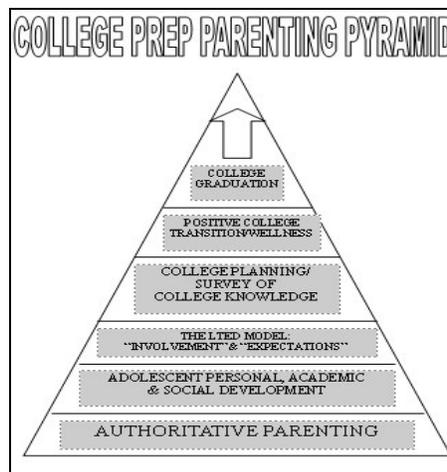
The self-ratings of the degree of CPK by the parents and students are based on their respective subjective judgments. This study will not attempt to determine if these assessments are objectively accurate. To do so would be quite worthwhile but it is beyond the scope of what can be realistically completed in this study. The rankings of the importance of these areas are also designed and recognized as a subjective measurement. Also, this study will not attempt to research the degree that these knowledge and importance variables are correlated with college graduation rates. This topic, however, is a recommendation for further research

## CHAPTER 2

### *Review of the Literature*

The structure of this Review of the Literature can be visualized by the “College Prep Parenting Pyramid” which I created (see Figure 2.1 below). Because parenting practices of adolescents are a foundation for high school students’ personal, academic, and social development, this Review of the Literature will examine Authoritative Parenting research succinctly as a foundation for College Preparation Knowledge (CPK).

Following this, the Review of the Literature explores Trusty’s Long-Term Educational Development model (2004) in terms of parental involvement with their high school students in college preparedness and career-decision-making. Then, this Review of the Literature progresses up the steps of the pyramid to college preparation; the CPK questionnaire is where this Dissertation enters a new area of research. College transition/attrition and Wellness (practicing healthy behaviors) research are not reviewed in detail but this pyramid provides a picture of the collegiate stages.



**Figure 2.1. The College Prep Parenting Pyramid**

By investigating, through the CPK questionnaire, what parents and their high school students think they understand about this CPK and what areas and items of CPK they think are most important, it is hoped that this research will promote student college preparation success. This topic, based on this Review of the Literature, has not been developed previously by existing research to any documented degree.

### *Adolescence and Parenting*

Adolescence, as a scientific field of study, began with G. Stanley Hall in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Baumrind, 1991). In a presidential address at the Biennial meeting for the Society for Research on Adolescence in Chicago, Laurence Steinberg (2001) noted that during the previous twenty years, no aspect of adolescent development had produced as much research as the study of parenting and the adolescent. In three leading journals of children and adolescence (*Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *Child Development*, and *Developmental Psychology*) approximately thirty percent of the research was dedicated to researching the parent-adolescent relationship. This was more than twice the amount addressing the topic of adolescents and their peers.

Adolescence has been defined as the period within the life span when the maturity of a person's biological, cognitive, and social characteristics change from being child-like to adult-like (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). Young adolescents, thirteen to fifteen years old, are striving to accomplish four developmental tasks. They are seeking autonomy and independence, social competency, meaning and purpose, and the right to solve problems on their own (Gibbs, 2001).

Older adolescents entering high school look forward to having more choices and making new and more friends; however, they are also worried about being treated negatively by older

students, having harder work, making lower grades, and getting lost in a larger, unfamiliar school (Mizelle, 1995).

Developmentally, compared to pre-adolescents, adolescents generally identify a wider range of possible changes in their lives, are better able at anticipating consequences of possible choices, and are better able at integrating information--and this is known as Formal Operational thinking based on Piaget's framework for cognitive development (Keating & Sasse, 1996). Peter Sutherland (1999) notes that the hallmark of youth includes both flexibility and options; the theme of adulthood involves responsibility and commitment.

Where to attend college must be decided, careers need to be initiated, relationship and marital bonds created, and children brought up. In a world of possibilities, choices must be made (Sutherland, 1999). Cognitive maturity cannot be formed without commitment. Chapman (1988, p. 245) writes, "formal thinking may be characterized by a general subordination of reality to possibility in the sense that what is real at any given moment is recognized as only one manifestation of a wider range of possibilities."

Individuals who have developed Formal Operational cognitive capacities can think logically, metaphorically, analogically, and divergently (Keating & Sasse, 1996). They can formulate hypotheses and make decisions through the isolation, combination, and proportional application of variables. Adolescents are beginning to reflect on the consequences and the thinking processes of both themselves and others (Arnett, 2001). Because adolescence is truly neither childhood nor adulthood but a combination of both, it is important to take into account their advanced cognitive abilities to think in considering possibilities but also their limitations due to the lack of seeing how possibilities may play out over time. These realities are particularly salient with college preparation and transition issues as the decisions made during these times

require sufficient CPK acquisition (and) understanding the importance of the various facets of CPK.

Adolescents in general often feel demeaned, neglected and rejected by adults. In George Barna's nationwide survey, profiled in his book *Real Teens* (2001), teenagers expressed disappointment with adults (parents, teachers, etc.) for causing them to feel as if they are not important in the adults' lives, for ignoring the adolescents' ideas when making decisions, and for communicating that adolescents' lack worth by basing their acceptance of adolescents solely on the standard of performance (academic and otherwise). Barna's research (2001) strongly advises that adults need to listen to adolescents. Only after listening thoroughly does he suggest that adults gently and carefully help adolescents identify and address inconsistencies, incompleteness, and inaccuracies in their thoughts.

As Barna concludes, failure to do so helps illustrate why teenagers struggle with taking guidance from and being taught by adults. Teens believe that adults don't respect them, comprehend them, or give them the liberty and creative freedom that they desire (Barna, 2001). Authoritative practices generally guide the adolescent to think and act in a responsible manner and thus gain the child his or her freedom appropriately.

One major problem affecting the stability and support of adolescent children is divorce. Lower rates of high school and college graduation exist among children of divorced parents. For children of divorce, compared with children from intact families, the attendance rate in college is about sixty percent lower (Fagan & Rector, 2000). Half of all children today will experience the divorce of their parents before their eighteenth birthday (Fagan & Rector, 2000). Since 1960, the proportion of children who do not live with their own two parents have risen sharply--from nineteen percent to forty-two percent in the 1990's (Wilcox, Doherty, Glenn, & Waite, 2005).

Almost fifty percent of the parents with children who are going through a divorce move into poverty after the divorce (average income is \$43,000 for two parents, \$23,000 one parent) (Fagan & Rector, 2000). Fagan and Rector found that never-married single parent families face many of the same issues that divorced families do (Fagan & Rector, 2000).

Children of divorce and single parent families show diminished social competence, less conflict resolution skills, and more frequently demonstrate a diminished learning capacity (Fagan & Rector, 2000). This makes issues such as the complex process of college preparation even more complicated due to the emotional, psychological, and financial stressors uniquely experienced by single parent families. Divorce and other family instability issues clearly negatively affect a significant proportion of students with college-attending aspirations.

Are parents that important in adolescent development? Trusty, Watts, and Erdman (1997) note that although adolescents become increasingly independent from their parents while in high school, parents are still the primary influencers of their children's choices. For example, a study by Kotlik and Harrison (1989) found that parents had more influence on their student's career choice than the student's counselors, teachers, friends, other relatives, or individuals working in a career of interest. A 1999 study by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago assessed 1053 high schools in major cities throughout the U.S. Of the ninety-six identified as "educationally outstanding," eighty percent of them had developed "strong partnerships" with parents ("When Kids Become Too Cool for Their Parents", 2007).

It is stressful for parents and adolescents to negotiate the teenager's individuation away from the group orientation of the family to the peer group while maintaining a connectedness to the family (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). Contrary to popular stereotypes of adolescent disregard for parental guidance, researchers have consistently found that parental influence on teenagers'

behavior remains extensive in adolescence (Brown, Mounts, Lamborn, & Steinberg, 1993). Spencer, Dupree, and Swanson (1996, p. 30) state, “Research has shown that during adolescence, the quality and even the affective nature between parents and children may change, but the influence of parents remains. Relationships may become strained as adolescents negotiate the challenge of relinquishing parental ties and childhood identifications yet the continuity of parental and family alliances are retained.”

A study by Slicker (1996) of 2,255 graduating high school seniors and 419 university freshmen found that the effects of parental style do lessen as the adolescent matures but the influence is still significantly present. Research demonstrates that pubertal maturation leads to a more equal relationship between teenagers and their parents, with adolescents having more independence and say in family decisions. There is also evidence of more conflict, especially with the mother (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Parents should delegate more authority to the adolescent as appropriate without surrendering parental control.

Giving adolescents appropriate freedom and responsibility to mature as teenagers provides momentum for entering adulthood with the knowledge to be successful through college and to their career. Authoritative parenting principles and practices are a foundation for creating stability and support for adolescent maturation into adulthood. As such, the CPK questionnaire balances the importance of both parents’ and students’ perspectives without diminishing the importance of either.

Effective parenting principles, known as Authoritative parenting, began to be identified in the research over 40 years ago amid a time of questioning authority and tradition. In 1966, Diane Baumrind published an article titled the “Effects of Authoritative Parental Control on

Child Behavior.” In that article, Baumrind introduced, defined, and contrasted “three modes of parental control” (Baumrind, 1968, p. 255): “Permissive,” “Authoritarian,” and “Authoritative.”

Baumrind (1968, p. 256) defined the Permissive parent as one “Who behaves in a non-punitive, acceptant, and affirmative manner towards the child’s impulse, desires, and actions.” Such a parent dialogues with the child about decisions and makes few demands on the child that the child does not agree with on the whole (Baumrind, 1968). Such a parent is supportive but not demanding. The Permissive parent believes, by practicing such affirmation of the child’s desires, that this gives that child the permission to become the person he or she wants to be. Adolescents from Permissive parenting homes are more likely to be engaged in unhealthy behaviors and do less well academically but have higher self-esteem, better social skills, and lower levels of depression as compared to children from Authoritarian parenting homes (Darling, 2005).

Traditional psychological theories based on Freud and Piaget advocated this more Permissive parenting style with teenagers, favoring freedom over control. Such theories espoused that the main task of adolescence is to differentiate away from parents and move away emotionally from the family to accomplish a new-found degree of identity (Bower, 1989). Baumrind (1991) notes that Freudian and Piagetian researchers’ preoccupation with autonomy, essentially explained as separation from parental control, has resulted in an avoidance and omission of looking at the issues of attachment during the adolescent years.

According to Baumrind (1968) an Authoritarian parent attempts to mold, control, and assess the attitudes and actions of the child in reference to an established code of behavior, typically non-negotiable; this parent prizes obedience as a positive quality and advocates strong methods to control the child’s self-will. The Authoritarian parent does not practice a dialogue with the child, seeking the child’s agreement to the decision at hand (Baumrind, 1968). Instead,

the parent expects that the child will accept the parental decree as binding and beyond dispute. Children and adolescents from Authoritarian parental homes do slightly above average in school and have lower incidences of participation in socially problematic behavior. Yet, they have weaker social skills, less self-esteem, and increased levels of depression as compared to children from Permissive parenting households (Darling, 2005).

A major critique of parental traditions from Freud and Piaget--and their adherents--was that consistent supervision, high demands, and other aspects of parental authority bred disobedience in children (Baumrind, 1968). Although the research does not bear this out as a global result of Authoritarian parenting, children and adolescents from these types of homes may suffer quietly and may not grow academically and socially as much as they are capable because of being raised in a restrictive home.

Without endorsing or rejecting these theorists whole-heartedly, yet understanding that there was truth to some degree in these critiques, Baumrind (1968, p. 261) observed that the Authoritative parent, "Attempts to direct the child's activities but in a rational, issue-oriented-manner. She (the parent) encourages verbal give and take, and shares with the child the reasoning behind her policy." The Authoritative parent esteems both autonomy and conformity in the child (Baumrind, 1968). Thus, the child progressively becomes more independent and responsible. These children and adolescents are more personally, socially, and academically competent than children from all other types of parenting homes (Darling, 2005).

Occasionally, in the research of Baumrind (1991) and others, "Neglecting" or "Rejecting" parenting also are discussed. It would be most appropriate to term these parenting styles as really non-parenting because it is the parents' abdication and desertion of parenting that is the reality. Darling (2005) notes that children and adolescents from uninvolved parental homes

like these do most poorly, compared to the three major types, across all domains. There have been other additions by Baumrind to her model including “Democratic” and “Good Enough” but these appear to be sub-categories under the three main definitions (Baumrind, 2005).

Most adolescents, according to Baumrind (1991), grow by taking risks and dreaming big. Parents need to recognize that risk is part of the process of growing up. In her view, the adolescent years require a teenager to learn well a series of risk-taking strategies for the formation of competence in the intellectual arena like applying to an Ivy League school) and social realms (like the first date). Yet, she says, “Most adolescents are not wise enough to beat the odds, but many are grandiose to think they can” (Baumrind, 1991, p. 112).

The Authoritarian parent micro-manages the adolescents’ life and tries to prevent mistakes that come from risk-taking. The Permissive parent takes a hand-off approach and that can lead to disaster. The Authoritative parent monitors and moderates risk-taking (“Parenting Styles,” 2005). Authoritative parents and other adults assist adolescents in making important decisions without squelching their emerging adulthood (Rosenzweig, 2001). They assist adolescents in making wise decisions despite differences of style (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Children raised in Authoritative homes make wiser decisions. They scored higher than their peers from Authoritarian or Permissive homes on a wide variety of measures of competence, academic achievement, social development, self-perceptions, and mental health (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling, 1992). Steinberg and his fellow researchers have comprehensively confirmed the effectiveness of Authoritative parenting (Steinberg, 2001). This Authoritative parenting principles and practices are particularly important during adolescence when teens are becoming less dependent and from their parents (Silk, Morris, Kanaya, & Steinberg, 2003)

Baumrind was quoted as stating--upon reflecting on her (at the time) thirty-plus years of research--in an address to the APA, “We expected that at puberty, some imbalance in favor of freedom over control would have become favorable, but that did not happen” (Bower, 1989, p. 17). Baumrind identified the “third-way” of Authoritative parenting, a construct that is between the extremes of Permissive and Authoritarian parenting styles. One could classify this threesome as “Giving Orders” – Authoritarian, “Giving In” – Permissive, and “Giving Choices” – Authoritative.

Through Baumrind’s (1996) continuing work and with other researchers following her lead (Steinberg, 2001), the development of the Authoritarian-Authoritative-Permissive parenting model has become the predominant framework in the United States for understanding parenting in the field of psychology (Steinberg, 2001).

Darling and Steinberg (1993) in the article “Parenting Style as Context: An Integrative Model” describe the (up-to-then) 25 years of research based on Baumrind’s formation of parenting styles and observe that a cogently coherent picture of parenting that successfully socialized children into the majority culture of the United States had emerged. Until Baumrind’s work on parenting, there was a chasm between “the study of socialization goals and the study of socialization techniques” (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 489). Baumrind’s theoretical model of Authoritative parenting synthesized the emotional and behavioral processes that under-girded previous models of socialization into a model of parenting style that was based in a focus on parents’ belief system. This model would significantly transform thinking about parenting style (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Some research has postulated that parenting behavior throughout adolescence is more of a reaction to adolescent behavior rather than the cause (Kerr & Stattin, 2003). However, there is

a preponderance of evidence suggesting that parental Authoritativeness is more causative of adolescent psychosocial development (Steinberg, 2004). Age, sex, life experiences, genes, personality, and talents, also play a role and not all of this can be attributed to parenting style.

Authoritative parenting fosters healthy adolescent independence, responsibility, autonomy, and decision-making. This empowered degree of adolescent decision-making is defined by Matushima and Shiomi as self-efficacy (2003, pp. 323-324) and is “The belief that one’s actions have an effect on the environment...it is an appraisal of how well one can execute a course of action required to deal with a specific prospective situation and how well one can cope with the situation.”

Self-efficacy represents a key aspect of psychosocial development in adolescence (Greve, Anderson, & Krampden, 2001). Balancing individuation and competency while practicing social integration and accepting and aspiring to social roles, is the developmental task begun in full in adolescence (Greve, Anderson, & Krampen). Authoritative parenting nurtures both autonomy and support, and avoids the extremes of independence and dependence, makes demands, and grants autonomy to the adolescent as appropriate. And, support and autonomy develop adolescent self-efficacy. There is a distinction in the literature between parental behavioral control (seen as healthy) and parental psychological control (seen as unhealthy) (Soucy & Larose, 2000). Essentially, behavioral control establishes and enforces the boundaries (i.e. consequences) between acceptable and unacceptable behavior without diminishing the psychological sense of self-efficacy of the adolescent. A psychologically controlling adult may use prolonged manifestations of guilt-laden strategies or retreat emotionally for an extended period of time to “teach” the adolescent the wrongness of his/her behavior whereas the behavioral control parent will issue accountability and then close the case and move on to a

better tomorrow with their teenager. Parental behavioral control encourages adolescent growth and adjustment to the new academic and social demands whereas parental psychological control is a predictor for academic and social developmental difficulties through high school and into the university years (Soucy & Larose).

Self-efficacy beliefs, empowered by Authoritative parenting, energize adolescent motivation. The level and degree of effort is the deciding ingredient in the composition of self-efficacy. This determines whether the person surmounts obstacles and avoids self-defeating and depressing strategies (Baumrind, 1996). Adolescence is a period of developing and practicing personal efficacy beliefs and a time of exercising ideas about one's power of attaining newly emerging goals like preparing for and attending college (Bradley & Corwyn, 2001). As the environment begins to afford new opportunities, adolescents must build new methods to handle these requirements at home with parents and siblings and among peers and adults in school, places of employment, religious institutions, and subsequently the college environment or other post-high school options.

With the increase of self-efficacy, there is a change in the quality and quantity of parenting. There is recent research suggesting that parental Authoritativeness decreases in adolescence (Laird, Petit, Bates, & Dodge, 2003). These findings suggest that parental Authoritativeness is not stable over time from early childhood through adolescence (Laird et al., 2003). A longitudinal study by Beyers and Goossens (2004) showed that parental Authoritativeness decreased 11% on the "Responsive" measure and 21% on the "Parental Knowledge" measure between the ages of 13-17 while there was an average 8% increase in the "Self-Reliance" measure.

Clearly an increase in self-reliance is a positive finding, and a decrease in parental responsiveness and parental knowledge are interacting with this increased self-reliance, causing a decrease to some degree in both. This is not necessarily negative but does suggest that authoritative parenting strategies in regards with adolescents are not the same as when these children were in their pre-adolescent years. Parental knowledge decreasing is mostly a result of adolescent reduced self-disclosure (Beyers & Goosens, 2004).

It is possible that parental knowledge also decreases because of the increasing complexities of processes such as college selection and financial aid, and other externally-based systems, which are not in the parents' direct domain and control. There is a lot of information available to parents. What may be lacking is a coherent understanding of this information and the need to avoid information overload.

### *High School and College Academic Achievement*

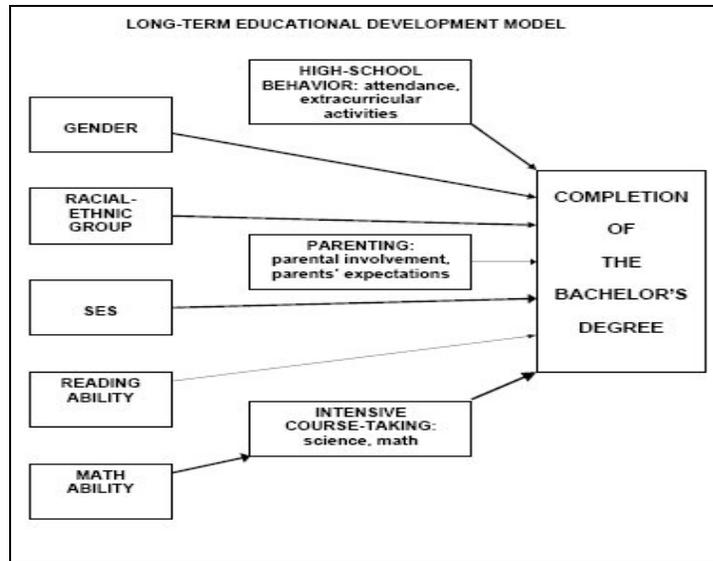
Student academic achievement is a major concern in American society, more hotly debated and politically charged than almost any other issue on the cultural landscape. Laurence Steinberg's book "Beyond the Classroom: Why School Reform Has Failed and What Parents Need to Do" (1996) is a good example of the plethora of books that stress the importance of parents in this genre that have been published in the last several decades.

Why students succeed or don't succeed academically specifically in college is a complex issue and defies easy analysis. In a study by NCES, students leaving college said that the primary reason they left college was because of needing to work or another financial reason. Also mentioned as significant were family issues and academic problems (NCES, 2003). In the collegiate context, extensive research shows that the most important predictor of college success

is the quality and intensity of the high school curriculum (Adelman, 1999). High school students who complete a complete college preparatory curriculum do better on college admission examinations such as the SAT and ACT. More importantly, they are more likely to be successful in college and graduate from college. This is particularly true for minority and economically disadvantaged adolescents. (Adelman, 1999)

College Board's "Research Notes" authored by Wayne Camara (2003) presented findings about college attendance and completion. High school graduates who attend college full-time right after high school composed eighty-three percent of the freshmen at four year colleges in 1995-1996. Sixty-four percent of these freshmen had earned a bachelor's degree in 6 years or less versus fifty-five percent of all freshmen (Camara, 2003). Three years after entering college, eighty-seven percent of students who had taken a challenging course load in high school stayed on track for a bachelor's degree as compared to sixty-two percent of students who had not even completed a core curriculum (Camara, 2003).

First-generation students are less likely to enroll in a four year college than students with at least one parent who obtained a bachelor's degree (sixty versus seventy percent and if they do go to college, they are much less likely to be still in college three years hence (thirteen versus thirty-three percent) (Camara, 2003). But, this is significantly reduced if the first-generation college student takes a challenging course load in high school (Camara, 2003). As college becomes a possibility for these students to consider due to their more adequate understanding of the college planning process and procedures, then academic achievement may be more likely to follow. It is this present investigator's belief that awareness of these issues will help make action on these issues more likely.



**Figure 2.2. The Long-Term Educational Development (LTED) Model**

- Permission to utilize the LTED Model in this research was secured in an e-mail from J. Trusty on November 1, 2007.

J. Trusty's Long-Term Educational Development Model (LTED Model) (2004) details the high school variables that are suggested to be significant predictors of college graduation. The model indicates that parent involvement in their high school student's college and career preparation is a potential predictor of college attendance and graduation rates. The effectiveness and authoritativeness of this parental involvement is predicated on the comprehensiveness of parental knowledge of college preparation and planning. And, this supports the necessity of having both parents and high school students take the CPK questionnaire.

Trusty's (2001) research has reviewed Authoritative parenting and its positive relationship to healthy adolescent outcomes such as internal locus of control, enhanced self-esteem, ambitious career goals, a positive attitude about school, improved psychosocial skills, decreased levels of drug use, increased extra-curricular activity involvement, consistent school

attendance, and rates of enrollment and success in rigorous academic course offerings. The parenting of adolescents results in a new combination of responsibilities and duties within the family and the greater society (Baumrind, 1991). Research on the effectiveness of Authoritative (Demandingness and Responsiveness) parenting on positive personal, academic, and social outcomes in adolescence is well-established (Trusty, 2001). Trusty's studies "yielded support for causal relationships posited by theories." (J. Trusty, personal communication, November 1, 2007).

Trusty (2004) used National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988 data (NELS: 1988-2000, 2002) to examine the effects of several middle-school and high-school variables--including parental involvement and expectations--on completion versus non-completion of the bachelor's degree. Data spanned across a 12 year time period from when students were in the eighth grade to when they were eight years out of high school. All 5,257 young people in Trusty's study had attended college soon after high school, and all were pursuing the bachelor's. Eight years after their senior year of high school, fifty-three percent of participants had realized their goals of completing the bachelors and forty-seven percent had not.

Using data drawn from this twelve-year national study, Trusty (2004) examined the effects of several middle-school and high school variables on the attainment or non-attainment of a bachelor's degree. Based on this research, Trusty constructed the LTED Model (Trusty, 2004; See Figure 2.2). Trusty's LTED model defines variables of high school adolescents, such as gender, race and ethnicity, SES, reading ability, math ability, high school behaviors (attendance, extra-curricular activities), rigorous course-taking and parental involvement and expectations, and demonstrates the predictive significance of these variables on the completion of the Bachelor's degree (Trusty, 2004).

Of particular interest to this study is his conclusion that the parental variables of “Involvement” and “Expectations” have a significant predictive relationship to the completion of a Bachelor’s degree. Expectation was narrowly defined to mean post-secondary planning discussions between the parents and their high school children,

The LTED model, according to Trusty (2004) is a pragmatic model for several reasons. The model illustrates variables influencing bachelor degree completion with only high school factors considered. Several of the variables can be enhanced in students by parents, counselors, teachers, and administrators, through strategies such as encouraging (at times, requiring) college-bound students to take more rigorous coursework (i.e. graduation requirements), to participate in extra-curriculars, and developing positive attendance habits (Trusty, 2004).

The major conclusions of Trusty’s LTED research are as numerous. Socioeconomic status (SES) had a strong effect on college degree completion; a one standard deviation increase in SES increased the likelihood of degree completion by sixty-two percent. Although Trusty (2004) does not state the specific statistical variances of the factors, he noted the following conclusions: (a) a students’ good attendance behavior in high school (not skipping school or classes) had a positive effect on college degree completion; (b) When students participated more in school-sponsored extra-curricular activities, they were more likely to complete the bachelor’s degree; (c) There was a moderate gender effect with women more likely than men to complete the bachelor’s degree; Asian-Americans and European- Americans were more likely than Latinos or African-Americans to complete the bachelor’s; and (d) When parents were more involved in their children’s education and when parents had higher postsecondary educational expectations for their children, young people were more likely to complete the bachelor degree. This last finding is of particular interest to this Dissertation research.

Trusty's (2004) study and the LTED Model demonstrate that student engagement is a key to students' long-term educational development. Important forms of student engagement are: (a) Academic engagement through taking intensive courses; (b) Engagement through good school attendance; (c) Engagement through participating in extracurricular activities; and (d) Engagement through parent involvement and holding high expectations for children. When students and parents are engaged in the above ways, students are much more likely to realize their educational goals. When they are not engaged, the likelihood of reaching their goals is diminished. The social and economic consequences of disengagement are pervasive and lasting.

Recommendations for schools follow: (a) Inform students, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators of the LTED model; (b) Develop an effective system for individual education career planning, complete plans consistent with their goals; (c) Align course-taking consistent with their goals; (d) Evaluate students' knowledge of various post-secondary options and evaluate whether there is agreement and consistency among parents, students, counselor, and teachers in regards to students, plans, and goals (CPK); (e) Use career plans to get students involved in extra-curricular activities which are associated and adhere to their plans; and (f) Promote good attendance.

As the LTED Model demonstrates, the central role of parents in this process is crucial to consider when the goal is improving the probabilities of college graduation through high school interventions, strategies, and programming. Trusty (2004) notes that parents/guardians act as a consistent source of educational, financial, and social support and expectation-setters for their children, whereas school counselors and other educators influences are more transitory in nature.

### *Parenting and College Preparation*

The effectiveness of parental support in facilitating their child's preparation for college is very much based on the parent and student having an accurate and comprehensive understanding of CPK and also in the parent/child dialoguing, discussing, and resolving disagreements, of what is the most to the least important items to both the parent and the college-bound adolescent.

The ACT (2004) Policy Report by Wimberly and Noeth concurs by noting that parents who are engaged in their child's education can be a powerfully positive influence on the student's academic achievement and post-secondary future. Yet, unless parents have the information and knowledge required, it is challenging for them to assist their children in exploring, planning, and making the successful transition from high school to college. Research demonstrates that parents, especially those who did not go to college, often lack the necessary tools, information, and resources to assist their children with college planning.

The ACT Policy Report (2003) concludes that many "highly motivated and well-intentioned parents still are not able to provide useful information and direction to their children (p.7)." College planning is a multi-year process involving a series of steps that are inter-related and involve student and parent aspirations, skill development, and knowledge acquisition (Wimberly & Noeth, 2004). The report highlights four key "transition points" in involving and equipping parents with the necessary information to assist their children with college planning (ACT, 2003): (a) Academic preparation, including program and course selection; (b) Understanding and using assessment information; (c) Formulating postsecondary plans; and (d) Learning about and obtaining financial aid for college.

Parents and their adolescent children often have varied levels of involvement, understanding, and perspectives, about many of the adolescents' activities. Generally, more

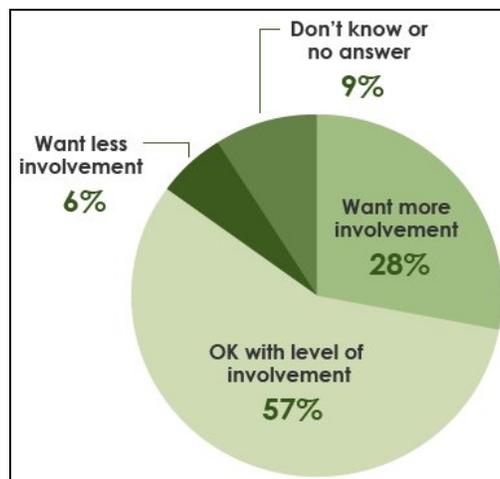
important activities require more parental information, input, and agreement (College Board, 2007). Knowledge is power because knowledge understood can be acted upon. It is crucial that parental guidance and involvement with their children on college preparation activities be based on accurate understanding of College Preparation Knowledge. Not every high school student needs to go to college to be successful. Yet for the ones who do decide to go to college, it is important to have as many of these students be successful as possible. I believe is indeed possible to improve the probability of college success for these college-bound high school students.

As the *College Transition Programs: Promoting Success Beyond High School*, Issue Paper, U.S. Department of Education states (p. 1): “Many young people fail to realize their aspirations because the process of preparing for life after high school is often a mystery to them. American youth need to have not only access to postsecondary education and training but also the knowledge and skills necessary to continue their education beyond high school.” The paper concludes, “College transition programs counsel students about the types of high school courses that prepare them for college-level work, the college application process, the required entrance assessments like the SAT or ACT, and the steps in applying for student aid.”

Clearly more parental involvement, input, and information, are needed to lessen the gap of parent and adolescent children’s CPK (Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2004). In the article, *Challenging the Myths: Rethinking the Role of School Counselors*, Issue Brief, Education Trust (2002), it notes the critical role of school counselors in the college preparation process. It states that school counselors must be the professionals bridging this divide by assisting students in academic course selection and performance and helping teachers make sure that all students succeed. This linking the school counselors to this mission of schools moves school counselors

into a key position in increasing access and equity for all students. In this approach, school counselors are the conduits and advocates for college planning. And, school counselors getting parents actively engaged in the college planning and preparation process is essential.

The College Board and the Art and Science Group (Bartini & Hesel, 2007) recently published an article that is based on a survey they conducted with 12<sup>th</sup> grade college bound students about the over-involved “Helicopter Parents” issue. Interestingly, the college-bound seniors surveyed were generally satisfied with their parents’ involvement in the college search process (fifty-seven percent. Six percent of the respondents wanted less involvement from their parents whereas twenty-eight percent wanted more involvement (nine percent did not know or did not answer).



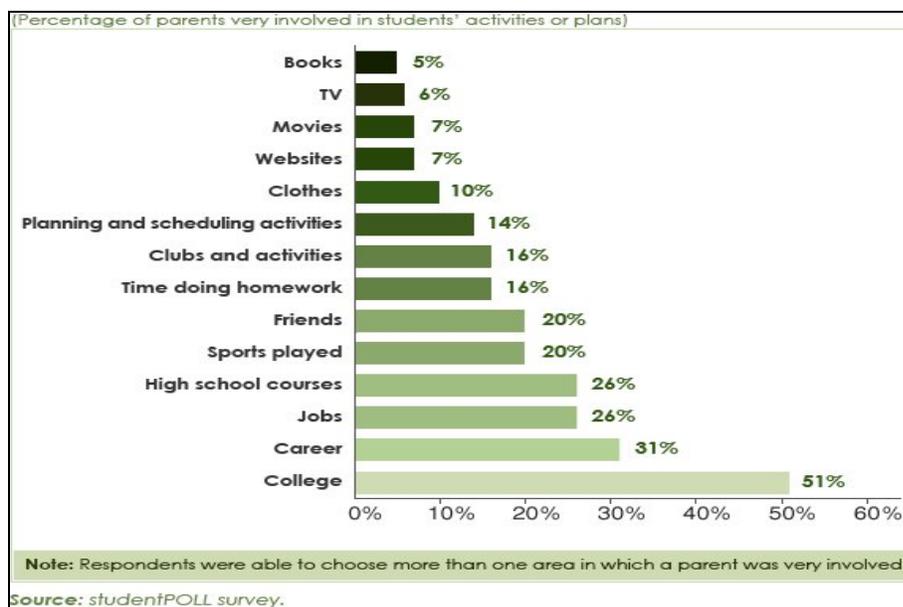
**Figure 2.3. Students Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction with Parents’ Level of Involvement in the College Search**

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College Board (2007) noted that the parents' highest involvement in the college selection process focused on college cost issues. Among the ninety-five percent of students who

selected that their parents were very involved or involved to some degree in their college plans, a high percentage indicated that their parents were very involved with or actually did the following financially-related tasks: (a) Filling out financial aid forms (forty-three percent); (b) Deciding what colleges they could afford (forty-four percent); and (c) Researching college costs (thirty-eight percent).

Figure 2.4 from the same report shows the level of parent involvement with various adolescent activities:



**Figure 2.4. Level of Parental Involvement with Students’ Activities and Plans**

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The activity above with the highest percentage of parental involvement is college preparation. The College Board on-line poll found that fifty-one percent of high school seniors who had taken the SAT reported that their parents were very involved in college preparation

issues with them (College Board, 2007). Significantly, twenty-eight percent of all respondents wanted more parental involvement (College Board, 2007). Among students in the College Board on-line survey who had lower SAT scores, and who came from families with lower household incomes, these respondents reported significantly less parental involvement in college planning. Over forty percent of these students expressed that they wanted more parental involvement with college preparation issues (College Board, 2007).

In general, parents were much more involved in issues concerning their child's future educational and career plans than in day-to-day activities. Parents were most involved in the college costs arena of college planning. The report noted, in reference to Figure 2.4, that parents are much more involved in issues related their child's long-terms future than in everyday activities. By far, parents' greatest involvement concerns college planning.

More than 50 percent of the students surveyed indicated that parents were *very involved* in their college plans. Only five percent reported that their parents were not at all involved in the college selection process. Nearly one-third of students also indicated that parents were very involved in helping them think about future career options. One-quarter of respondents also indicated that their parents were very involved in helping them get jobs during the summer and after school, and helping them to decide what courses to take in high school. Involvement does not mean, however, doing the college preparation and other tasks for their children; it does mean that the parent is aware of what needs to be done and provides the support, the expectation, and the accountability, that such tasks are completed.

ACT (American College Testing) research trends also indicate that more parental involvement, not less, is the best strategy for parents to increase the likelihood that children will attend college. Schools are making attempts to change the declining parent involvement

throughout the adolescent years by engaging parents more in course selection, interpretation of testing results, college admissions workshops and other programming related to postsecondary planning, and financial aid seminars (Wimberly & Noeth, 2004).

Research shows that the parenting principles and practices experienced by adolescents are internalized in the child and that these young people are still pervasively (both positively and negatively) affected by what they have experienced, even after they leave the family and go away to college (Soucy & Larose, 2000). Strage and Brandt (1999) note that few studies have investigated the effect of parenting styles on college students.

Existing theory and Strage and Brandt's study point to the importance and continuing effect of parenting style on college-attending children after these young adults are no longer in daily contact with their parents, particularly in reference to the students' orientation toward their academic work. The data from another study (Strage, 1998) suggest a persistent and continuing influence of parental ideas and actions, which continue to be significantly salient in the lives of many college students even in the absence of daily, regular, or even very infrequent contact with parents.

Smith (2006) completed a study along these lines that concluded that Authoritative parenting was related to more positive attributes in the college students who participated in the research study than either the Authoritarian or Permissive parenting styles. While Permissive parenting was related to better emotional adjustment than Authoritarian parenting, the differences as a consequence of these parenting styles were insignificant.

A more complete understanding of how a young adult's identity changes in the context of the family in the high school to college transition would be best examined through longitudinal

studies and that is an area for further research recommended by Ross, Hammer, and Johnson (2002).

*Research for the Development of the College Preparation Knowledge Questionnaire*

CPK--the “how to” and facts of preparing for college-- is a domain of knowledge, much like math, science, English, social studies, foreign languages, and other additional academic disciplines, albeit on a much more discrete scale. Unlike these accepted disciplines, a serious lack of attention, resources, school time, and staffing, is dedicated to enhancing CPK in students and parents, especially in the populations who need it most: first generation college students, many of whom are lower socio-economical groups.

It seemed apparent to me that the CPK questionnaire was a reasonable approach to try and convey CPK to college-bound high school students and their parents and to ascertain college planning and preparation activities based on what the results revealed, particularly so because we have a sizable population of college-bound students at our high school whose parents have not gone and/or graduated from college. With the access and availability of the internet and on-line survey tools to collect, collate, and communicate such results clearly, it seemed to be that a CPK questionnaire was timely and necessary. I also made provisions for students and parents who did not have internet access at home that were discrete and confidential.

Parents and their adolescent children need to work together with secondary school educators to facilitate the child’s educational attainment and to develop appropriate post-secondary goals based on this educational achievement (Trusty, 2004). A vast majority of adolescents recognize the value of a college degree (over ninety percent) and ninety-five percent of students and parents grades 6-12 expect more schooling after high school (Johnson, Duffett &

Ott, 2005). With eighty-four percent of all high school graduates anticipating earning an associate's or a bachelor's degree, and with only forty-one percent having done so by ages 30-34, parents' involvement with their children, and their expectations of their children, are necessary areas to examine in our endeavors to increase college graduation rates (Johnson & Duffett, 2005).

Economic Policy Institute writer Joydeep Roy wrote (2005, p. 2) "That family poverty and income affects educational outcomes adversely is well-established. What is less appreciated is the fact that that even for academically high-performing students, income and poverty greatly affects subsequent educational attainment such as completing college." Below-average scoring students from high SES families complete college as frequently as the above-average students from low SES families on a standardized math test (Roy, 2005). And, math ability and achievement are the leading academic predictors of college completion (Trusty & Niles, 2003). Thus, it is clear that low SES exerts a tremendously powerful countering negative effect on college completion rates even after academic ability and achievement are taken into account and this low SES, in most cases, indicates lower parental educational attainment (Roy, 2005).

These statistics clearly tell a story in our society, both of young adults and their parents, who have ambitious goals of college success but who lack access to an accurate and comprehensive understanding of what it takes to make those goals a reality. The lack of knowledge about college preparation and the lack of comprehension about its importance deepens the already significant divide between the "haves" and the "have nots."

Consequently, the U.S. pays an astronomical cost in financial and social capital when students with good potential are fairly powerless to improve their station in life through a fundamental lack of knowledge of how to get to college. As Walpole (2003) notes in the article

“Socioeconomic Status and College: How SES Affects College Experiences and Outcomes,” low SES students participate in less extracurricular activities, work more hours in employment, do not study as much, and have lower grades than their high SES peers. Nine years after beginning college, the low SES students had less income, educational achievement, and graduate school attendance. These arise in because of the differences in cultural capital (knowledge and practices).

In the face of these problems, the task becomes imperative to explain why these trends are happening and how we as a society, particularly in secondary schools working with students and parents, can take appropriate steps to address these issues in enhancing collegiate cultural capital and habits.

Researching dissertations on college preparation helped define what parents and students may need to know about college preparation. While existing dissertations have helped define the body of CPK, these dissertations have not generally and comprehensively looked at the relative importance and understanding of the CPK areas and items in reference to another as determined by parents and high school students.

Stephen Allen (2004) in his Ph.D. dissertation “The Experiences of High School Juniors and Parents as They Engage in the College Search Process” noted that three themes emerged from the data: (a) Preparation for college; (b) Selection process; and (c) Expectations of college. The first theme, “preparation for college,” included students’ and parents’ dialogue about plans, college preparation in high school, college entrance exams, the stress of doing well academically in high school, and needs in regard to the college search and selection process. The second theme of “selection process” included the cost of college, quality of academics, institutional qualities, and engaging in the actual college admission and selection activities. The third theme,

“expectations of college” addressed the expectations that students and parents had of college. Students and parents talked about freedom in college, college life, careers, and the personal growth that is gained in college.

Frances Helen Haymore-Cagampang (1992), in her Ph.D. dissertation “What Parents Know about Preparing for College and How it Affects Their Children's Academic Performance: Parents' Information in the College Choice Decision” concluded that knowledge about high school performance requirements, college entrance standards, and application process comprehension, are components of the human and social assets that college-educated parents have which is based on their own college background. She noted that families who reside in areas with few college-educated individuals are prone to have minimal knowledge about preparing for college, thus their children’s educational and career goals may be unrealized. She further observed that major parent concerns were college entrance requirements and financial aid

In a doctoral dissertation about the school and counselor roles in increasing college enrollment, Esther Hugo (2004) concluded that, in the four California comprehensive high schools that she included in her study, the foundation to successful college counseling was striking the balance between high-quality individual attention and high-quality mass communication in the school and community-wide about college preparatory issues. Counselors and administrators developed a school-wide plan of preparing all students for college, a message that was a part of every counseling interaction.

A review of doctoral dissertations through Pro-Quest [www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com) demonstrated no evidence of comparable research examining what parents and high school college-bound students think they know about the college planning process and what they perceive to be important in the college planning process. Furthermore, there is an absence of literature

measuring how parents and students are either similar or different on these “importance and knowing” CPK variables. A survey of the Academic Search Premiere and Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) document databases likewise revealed no research of these parent and children “importance and understanding” College Knowledge variables

The College Board Counseling Sourcebook (College Board, 2005) was especially foundational in helping clarify what areas and items to put into the CPK. The College Board also conducted an informal survey of college admission counselors which assessed what aspects of the college planning process was perceived to be most important by college admissions counselors. This survey was directly based on the College Counseling Sourcebook. The Senior Director of the Sourcebook, Renee Gernand, (personal communication, December 5, 2006) listed what was determined to be the 15 most important college preparatory categories by the college admission counselors.

These categories were the recommended classes for college prep, study and note taking tips, the importance of extracurricular activities, what admission test really measure, information on PSAT/NMSQT etc., preparing for admissions tests, finding and exploring colleges, college selection decision-making, careers and college majors information, completing college applications, early decision and early action plans, making the transition to college, what college costs now, how financial aid works, and college financing options.

The college admission counselors’ stated that the top three questions parents asked were (in order of importance) costs/financial aid, testing, and applying to colleges. The college admission counselor respondents gave the following five categories the most “Very Important” votes (in order, from highest to lowest): (1) Finding and exploring colleges; (2) Recommended classes for college prep; (3) Information on PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, etc.; (4) How financial aid

works; and (5) Completing college applications. These results assisted in the development of the categories that were defined by the CPK questionnaire. The categories are: (a) Helping students prepare for college; (b) Helping students research colleges; (c) Helping students understand the college application process; (d) Helping students understand standardized testing; (e) Helping students understand costs of college, financial aid, and scholarships; (f) Helping students understand career development. In order to obtain a broader and more comprehensive perspective on College Knowledge issues, several policy reports were reviewed. The “ACT Policy Report: Schools Involving Parents in Early Postsecondary Planning” provided much insight into what students and parents need to know about college planning in the four major areas of academic preparation, understanding and using assessment information, formulating postsecondary plans, and learning about and obtaining financial aid for college. It affirms the need for schools to develop strategies to reach college-bound students and their parents with the information (Wimberly & Noeth, 2004).

The “State of College Admissions” examined researching and applying to colleges (Hawkins & Lutz, 2005). A similarly themed resource focusing on Pennsylvania, “PA Rising Tide: The Current State of Higher Education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania” provided comprehensive review of Pennsylvania higher education issues with a focus on educational attainment, patterns of college enrollment, participation (by income, geography, college readiness), pricing, the needs of the economy, and remediation (community colleges). This report noted that between 1990 and 2000, the number of Pennsylvania college graduates increased by a total of nearly a half-million people and this thirty percent increase was not due to an increase in the population 25 and older which was only five percent. So there is some good progress being made in Pennsylvania according to this report (Iannozzi, 2006).

Venezia, Kirst and Antonio, in “Betraying the College Dream” (2004), looked at the academic preparation for college issues (particularly in reference to race and family income) along with standardized testing and financial aid. This study was particularly helpful in examining the problems associated with first-generation college students. The authors noted:

“One of the major problems concerns the poor knowledge students and teachers have of college policies--their lack of clear understanding makes good college preparation difficult. This problem is compounded by the fact that many high school students, especially the most disadvantaged, receive inadequate counseling and opportunities for college preparation (p.11.)....Counselors, in a study, “Were ranked 6<sup>th</sup>, behind mother, friends, father, siblings, and teachers or administrators, in frequency of students discussion of post high school plans....Counselors face a range of responsibilities that compete for their time, including test administration, course scheduling, providing mental health and other counseling services, addressing disciplinary issues, and supporting students with special needs. This leaves many students with few consistently available people at the school site who are familiar with college transition issues. Many high schools do not have counselors who specialize only on high school to college transitions (p.41)...Many K-12 students do not have a good sense of what is expected of them in college, and most K-12 educators do not know how to help students gain an understanding of those standards (p.22)...It’s time to expand policy attention to emphasize not only access to college, but also access to success in college. High school course content, academic counseling, college outreach, and other programming needs to reflect this so that students are clear about what it takes to succeed in college (p. 46).”

The research report by Rosenbaum (2002) “Beyond Empty Promises: Policies to Improve Transitions into College and Jobs” detailed college success and career development and that not all students need to go to college to be successful. “Closing the College Participation Gap” examined college participation and college degree attainment issues, especially along age, race, ethnicity, and income issues (Ruppert, 2003). “Getting Ready to Pay for College” by Horn, Chen, and Chapman (2003) primarily focused on financial aid and getting information about college admissions information and academic requirements to high school students and their parents. It found parents and students substantially overestimate tuition amounts, especially for

public institutions. They think it costs double what it does. Tierney and Hagedorn's (2005) "Making the Grade in College Prep" addressed college preparation for at-risk students and what can be done programmatically to increase success of at-risk populations.

Carey (2005) in the "One Step from the Finish Line" report examined college graduation rates at colleges and universities which are a solid benchmark of evaluating institutional college graduation success with some limitations. The Federal formula is rigid. It is defined as six years after a student started at the same institution. Among the major trends, forty percent of students nationally are part-time and fifty-seven percent of students are 22 and older. Students are not necessarily drop-outs, they are just taking a long time to get degree. Some colleges do a lot better than others without sacrificing excellence.

The "State System of Higher Education Factbook 2005-2006" primarily focused on financial aid and graduation rates in Pennsylvania (SSHE, 2006). McDonough's (2004) "The School to College Transition: Challenges and Prospects" noted that the national ratio of students to counselors is 490:1 and that "college" guidance activities function as only thirteen percent of the high school counselors' time. This report cites the following major factual misunderstandings of high school students about college: (a) Expectations of college level work; (b) College exam placement content; (c) Costs of tuition; and (d) Understanding college costs and the financial aid system, are the parents' biggest need.

In terms of career planning, "The Horizon Report" by New Media Consortium and Educause (2005) looked at how technology is transforming education and careers. The trends that are affecting higher education are: Costs are rising and budgets shrinking; more non-traditional students who are working are attending college, and the traditional student enrollment

will soon start going down. That report provided support for the career development area and items of the CPK questionnaire.

“Life After High School” by Johnson, Duffet, and Ott, (2005) detailed what young people hoped for educationally and what they saw their prospects as being. It noted that the vast majority of all young adults recognize the value of a college degree (ninety percent, plus) and Hispanic and African-American youth are twice as likely to be impressed by someone who has a college degree (fifty percent. This demonstrates that minority youth are not against being educated more than their non-minority peers. In fact, they seem more inclined to respect educational attainment.

The National Association for College Admissions Counseling (Kadaba, 2007) surveyed its members to evaluate what they thought were the fifteen most important factors in college admissions (which is a category in the CPK Questionnaire). Listed are the percentages of admission counselors who ranked the items of “considerable importance” from highest to lowest. They are: (a) grades in college prep courses (seventy-five percent); (b) strength of curriculum (sixty-one percent); (3) admission test scores (sixty percent); (d) grades in all courses (fifty-one percent); (e) essay/writing sample (twenty-seven percent); (f) class rank (twenty-three percent); (g) counselor recommendation (twenty-one percent); (h) student’s demonstrated interest (twenty percent ); (i) teacher recommendation (nineteen percent); (j) interview (ten percent); (k) extracurricular activities (seven percent); (l) subject test scores (AP, International Baccalaureate) (seven percent); (m) state graduation exam scores (six percent); (n) SAT II scores (five percent); and (o) work (two percent)

### *Importance of the College Degree*

Finally, is earning a college degree really that important? Yes; six out of ten jobs in the U.S. economy require highly skilled workers who possess post-secondary education and training (McDonough, 2004). Although the United States is ranked fifth in college participation rates when compared to other countries, we are sixteenth in college completion rates (Bowen, 2006). Nationally, fifty-three percent of students who enter college have graduated five years later with a bachelor's degree (ACT, 2003). In Pennsylvania, only seventy-seven percent of students will graduate from high school on time, forty-seven percent will enroll in college, and twenty-eight percent will earn a degree (Amoros, 2005).

Over forty percent of college-bound students in high school believe that high school academic achievement has little relevance for their future careers and many counselors are not addressing this ignorance (Rosenbaum, 2002). In 1982, thirty-two percent of counselors urged college for their lowest achieving students. A decade later, sixty-six percent of school counselors advised college for their lowest achieving students. Some school counselors try to warn students that their performance is lacking and that their college preparation is at risk. But parents complain about this perceived counselor criticism of their children and the principals often don't support the counselors (Rosenbaum, 2002). Among college freshmen in 1995, seventeen percent were in remedial writing courses, thirteen percent were in remedial reading courses, and twenty-four percent were in remedial math courses (Camara, 2003). The Institute for Higher Education Policy estimates that the cost of remediation in public higher education is two billion annually (Camara, 2003).

College participation and graduation is disparate along age, race/ethnicity, and income categories. States will likely not be able to expand, or even protect, college access in the future

due to increased costs of college attendance and decreased financial resources (Ruppert, 2003). In the past twenty-five years, tuition and fees have risen faster than personal income, consumer prices, and health insurance (Block, 2007). For the academic year 2006-2007, the average cost of tuition, room and board at a public college/university was \$12,796. For a private college/university, the total was \$30,367 (Block, 2007). Educational debt has risen from about \$9,000 in 1993 to around \$19,000 after adjusting for inflation (a fifty-eight percent increase) (Block, 2007).

Many professional fields require a bachelor's degree. Employment forecasts project a continued growth in occupations which require a bachelor's degree (Trusty & Niles, 2004). Achieving a bachelor's degree has increased in its financial importance in the last three decades. The gap in earning power between college graduates and non-college graduates is continuing to grow (Trusty & Niles). Three decades ago, men who earned a college degree made only nineteen percent more yearly than same-aged young men who concluded their formal education after graduating from high school. Today, men with college degrees earn sixty-three percent more in yearly earning than other non-college-bound male high school graduates. Women with a four year college degree earn seventy percent more today than young women who only have a high school diploma, twice the difference since 1975 (U.S. News & World Report, 2006).

In 2003, workers with a bachelor's degree earned a median income of \$49,000. Those who had attended college but not graduated had a median income of \$35,700. Those with a high school diploma earned \$30,800 (Kelley, 2005). Additionally, college graduates have higher rates of employment. The unemployment rate for college graduates was two percent in 2006, which was about half of the general rate of unemployment (U.S. News & World Report, 2006).

As tuition rates are rising above the rate of inflation, and with student financial aid decreasing, we must find a way to do more with less (Murphy, 2002).

### *Literature Implications and Research Questions*

The Review of the Literature suggests that exploring the importance and understanding of College Preparation Knowledge area/items rankings of parents and their high school students may help school counselors address parent and student needs and improve upon the current state of college preparation in the United States (Jacks, 2003). This study is an exploration in how high school counselors and Guidance Departments may proceed.

1) What views do parents and students have about the importance of the areas/items of CPK?

What are the views of parents and high school students about their self-perceived understanding of the areas/items of CPK?

2) How do parents and their high school students differ in their self-perceived importance of the areas/items of CPK? How do parents and their high school students differ in their understanding rankings of the areas/items of CPK? In more detail, the questions are as follows: (a) Is the self-perceived importance of these areas/items of CPK significantly different between parents who are college graduates versus those parents who are not college graduates? ; (b) Is the ranking in terms of understanding of these areas/items of CPK significantly different between parents who are college graduates versus those parents who are not college graduates? ; (c) Is the self-perceived importance of these areas/items of CPK significantly different between students whose parents are college graduates versus those whose parents are not college graduates? and (d) Is the

ranking of understanding of CPK areas/items significantly different between students whose parents are college graduates versus those whose parents are not college graduates?

3) How do the high school counselor “experts” focus group’s rankings of the importance of the areas/items of CPK differ compared to: (a) Parents’ importance rankings of the items/areas of CPK? ; (b) High school students’ importance rankings of the items/areas of CPK? ; (c) Are the parents who are college graduates and their high school students more similar to the high school counselors’ in their ranking of importance of the CPK areas/items than the parents who are not college graduates and their children?

### *Hypotheses*

The hypotheses state that the parents who are college graduates and their high school students are significantly different in what they think is important and what they think they understand about CPK as compared to parents who did not go to college and their high school students in what they think they think is important and what they think they understand about the CPK. This may have significant implications for how high school guidance departments serve these two different populations.

The Research Questions Stated as Hypotheses are:

1) RQ # 1 – It is hypothesized that the descriptive statistics will show heterogeneous answers among the various groups in terms of importance and understanding of areas/items of the CPK questionnaire. There will not be an attempt to infer the significance of the differences. That follows in the next Research Questions.

2) RQ # 2 - It is hypothesized that there will be significantly different views of parents and high school students about their self-perceived importance of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire. It is hypothesized that there will be significant differences in the views of parents and students about the understanding of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire.

\* The rationale for this question, based on the research, is that it could be expected that parents and students (all four groups) may not agree on the importance of the CPK questionnaire areas/items due to the differences of age, educational attainment, and experiences, and priorities of parents and high school students. The research also suggests that there could be significant differences in regards to understanding of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire among these four groups.

3) RQ # 2 - It is also hypothesized that the self-perceived understanding of these areas/items of the CPK questionnaire are significantly different between parents who are college graduates versus those parents who are not college graduates.

\* The research suggests that the parents who graduated from college should know more about the area/items of the CPK questionnaire as compared to the parents who did not graduate from college.

4) RQ # 2 - It is hypothesized that the ranking in terms of importance of these areas/items of the CPK questionnaire is significantly different between parents who are college graduates versus those parents who are not college graduates.

\* The research suggests that the parents who graduated from college may rank the importance of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire differently as compared to the parents who did not graduate from college. The research suggests that parents who are college graduates may better know what area/items of the CPK questionnaire are actually more important than others. Whereas parents who are not college graduates may be likely to have incorrect views about really what is most important.

5) RQ # 2 - It is hypothesized that the self-perceived understanding of these areas/items of the CPK questionnaire is significantly different between high school students whose parents are college graduates versus those high school students whose parents are not college graduates.

\* The research suggests that students whose parents graduated college have a better understanding of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire. Since the parents who went to college have a better understanding, it should follow that their children should have a better understanding also.

6) RQ # 2- It is hypothesized that the ranking of importance of the CPK questionnaire areas/items is significantly different between students whose parents are college graduates versus those whose parents are not college graduates.

\* The research suggests that high school students whose parents graduated from college may rank the importance of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire differently as compared to

the high school students whose parents who did not graduate from college. The research suggests that students whose parents who are college graduates may know what area/items of the CPK questionnaire are actually more important than others. Whereas students whose parents are not college graduates may be likely to have incorrect views about really what is most important

3) RQ 3 - It is hypothesized that high school counselor focus group's rankings of the importance of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire are significantly different compared to: (a) Parents' rankings of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire and (b) High school students' rankings of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire.

\* The basis for hypothesizing a difference is that high school counselors presumably have the most accurate and factual understanding of the importance of the CPK questionnaire areas/items. Parents and students typically will not have as accurate and factual understandings of the areas/items of the CPK questionnaire. Hence, there will be differences.

4) RQ 3 - It is further hypothesized that parents who graduated from college and their high school children are significantly more similar, than the parents who did not graduate from college and their high school children, in their importance rankings of the CPK questionnaire areas/items to the importance rankings of the high school counselors.

\* Based on the research, it is believed that parents who graduated from college, and their high school students, know more about the CPK questionnaire areas/items because of the parents own experiences of attending and graduating from college. Thus, their answers should be more similar to that of the high school counselors.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

#### *Sample*

A suburban/rural high school in Pennsylvania where I am a school counselor was the location for this study. The school has approximately 1,100 students enrolled of whom approximately 45% go to college. The available sample for this study contained around 500 college-bound students and their parent(s). Thus, to attain a 95% confidence level, the questionnaire would have needed to be completed by approximately 275 students and 275 parents in order to adequately represent the college-bound family population as a whole.

The college-bound students and their parents were generally defined as those students who were taking academic college preparatory courses in English and Math (both defined as a having a large majority of college-bound students). Students, self-identified as college-bound, even if taking non-college preparatory courses--and his/her parents/guardians--were still given the opportunity to complete the CPK questionnaire if they wanted to do so.

The primary socio-economic status of the students and parents in this high school is upper middle class/ white collar to lower middle class/ blue collar. The district does have a sizable working poor population. Ethnically and racially, the high school is predominantly white (89%). Upwardly mobile African-American families from the Baltimore city area and Hispanic/Latino families from New York and York cities have been moving into the district. As a result, the school district is approximately 10% African-American and 1% Hispanic/Latino.

Also sampled and completing the CPK questionnaire importance areas/items were 29 practicing high school counselors attending my 2007 Pennsylvania State Counselors Association presentation on the CPK research and how it applied to parents and college-bound students.

### *Measure – College Knowledge Preparation Questionnaire*

As noted previously, a valuable foundation for the CPK questionnaire was the *College Counseling Sourcebook: Advice and Strategies from Experienced School Counselors* published by the College Board (2005). This publication contains over 200 pages of college counseling information. Specifically designed for the high school counselor, the resource provides an in-depth resource of college counseling facts. Its Editorial Board was comprised of 34 high school counselors as well as the College Board staff.

*The College Counseling Sourcebook* also incorporates the tips and insights of school counselors throughout the United States. The publication's contributors represent small and larger high schools, private and public, and urban, suburban, and rural high schools. As such, it is a representative resource from a wide range of school counselors and College Board staff who have expertise in the issues of college counseling.

While the *College Counseling Sourcebook* is certainly more comprehensive than most parents and students need and require, there are key facts outlined in the publication that do need to be known by these families. Thus, in combination with additional resources already noted in the *Review of the Literature* and my professional expertise, the *College Counseling Sourcebook* functioned as the major resource for the CPK questionnaire.

The CPK questionnaire, based on the research review as previously noted, was originally constructed so that it contained five areas: Preparing for College, Researching College, The

College Application Process, Standardized Testing, and Costs of College/Financial Aid/Scholarships After the CPK questionnaire was developed, it was sent to J. Trusty of the LTED Model for review. He suggested that a Career Development category should be added and this was done with the creation of 10 additional items. My goal was to make the CPK questionnaire comprehensive and in-depth enough to cover the major areas of college preparation and planning sufficiently, without making it too long and overly difficult to discourage parent and student participation. The projected time for parents and students to complete the questionnaire was under thirty minutes. A copy of the College Preparation Knowledge questionnaire is contained in Appendix B.

Gregory L. Smith, a professor at Dickinson College, who has published and speaks professionally on parenting styles and the first-year college students' adaptation to college (Smith, 2006) agreed to read through the dissertation proposal and the CPK questionnaire and made suggestions for improvements.

The *Content Domain Validity* (degree to which a test provides a sufficient sample of a specific content domain) and the *Construct Validity* (summaries that are connected with empirical events) of the College Preparation Knowledge questionnaire were deemed sufficient for this study (Murphy & Davidshofer, 2001). The *Content Validity* was affirmed by experts in the field and research.

It must be noted that I was aware of the possibility that the negative change in the economic state in our country and world, since the school counselors did the ratings of importance for CPK questionnaire in the spring of 2007. This could have perhaps had some effect on the relative importance of issues such as financial aid, scholarships, and career development. More than likely, these factors would have made the issue of finance more

important to the school counselors now than they were originally. There was no practical manner to assess the degree of such possible changes but it was important to be aware that such changes might occur. In evaluating the reliability of the CPK questionnaire, Internal Consistency Reliability (*Cronbach's Alpha*) provided the most appropriate strategy. This assessed the reliability of the CPK questionnaire in estimating how the items that represent the same construct/category (i.e. standardized testing, etc.) provided consistent results (Murphy & Davidshofer, 2001). The results for this analysis are presented in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1. Cronbach Alphas for the Sub-Scales in the CPK questionnaire**

Area (Questions/Items)	Cronbach's Alpha
Prepare - Importance (Q7-Q14)	.747
Research – Importance (Q18-Q25)	.771
Application – Importance (Q27-Q29)	.888
Testing – Importance (Q41-Q56)	.910
Costs – Importance (Q58-69)	.884
Career – Importance (Q71-Q80)	.873
Prepare – Understanding (Q82-Q89)	.899
Research – Understanding (Q102-Q114)	.943
Application – Understanding (Q116-Q131)	.958
Testing - Understanding (Q116-Q131)	.963
Costs – Understanding (Q133-Q144)	.968
Career – Understanding (Q146-Q155)	.958

As demonstrated in Table 3.1, the internal consistencies of all of the sub-scales within the CPK questionnaire are within the acceptable range (greater than .7) for Cronbach's alpha (e.g. Garson, 2010).

*Procedures for CPK Questionnaire: H.S. School Counselors*

To collect data for the importance areas/items from the school counselors for the CPK questionnaire, I made a presentation at the Pennsylvania State Counselor Association Annual Conference in April of 2007 about CPK topics to consider in working with parents and college-bound students. There, twenty-nine high school counselors completed the CPK questionnaire.

Although this was a sample of convenience, the group was comprised of school counselors who were actively employed in high school Guidance Departments across Pennsylvania. According to the PDE website (PDE, 2006), there were 2734 high school counselors employed in Pennsylvania during the school year of 2005-2006. The male to female ratio was approximately 1:2. This sample that completed the CPK questionnaire contained a larger group of female counselors: 1:4 (male to female).

Although not officially noted on the demographic part of the CPK questionnaire, anecdotally the audience was heterogeneous in terms of age, ethnicity, and geography. In terms of telephone area codes, each area in Pennsylvania was represented.

*Procedures for CPK Questionnaire: Parents and Students*

Starting in the spring of 2009, I obtained permission from the Northeastern Board of School Directors to proceed with this study. In October and November 2009, I met separately with district and high school administration, high school counselors, the faculty, college-bound

students in grades 10-12, and college-bound students in grade 9. These meetings were well-attended and appeared to be well-received by both students and staff. After meeting with the administration, faculty, and students, the process to administer the CPK questionnaire, I sent out a parental letter about the study in January as a follow-up. The purpose of doing so was to inform parents (and re-inform students) of the purpose of the study and for them to see the benefits personally for participating. Parents and students were directed to sign the Parent Consent Form that was included in the letter and to have the students return it to the Guidance Department.

When the Parent Consent Form was returned, the parents/students were emailed a link to the online CPK questionnaire. For parents and students without internet access at home, the students were given hard copies of the CPK questionnaire, completed it at home (parent(s) and student), and then returned the completed questionnaires to the school.

To be as inclusive and non-limiting as possible, it was decided that any student and parent who self-identified college plans at the high school would be provided the opportunity to participate in this research. As such, every family with students in the high school had an equal opportunity to participate as part of the sample. Only if a student was not taking college prep math and English courses, and/or was not passing such non-college preparation courses, did I not make follow-up contact for these families to participate in the CPK questionnaire. Not taking the correct college preparatory courses, and not passing such courses (that are significantly less difficult than college preparatory), were significant indicators that the student was probably unlikely to attend college after graduation from high school. Even so, if such families completed the CPK questionnaire without further researcher contact, then their responses were included in the results.

During the student meetings, students received both verbal and written information about the CPK questionnaire, as well as encouragement for aspiring towards high goals in their college-plans and preparation. Students were provided a copy of the Parent Consent Form to return signed by their parents and the students to the high school Guidance Department. It was felt that putting college-bound students in a primary position to follow through with the Parent Consent Form process communicated the expectation that it was reasonable and developmentally appropriate for college-bound students to assume responsibility for this college planning activity. The presentations to students emphasized that the CPK questionnaire would assist college-bound students and their parents to self-assess their own knowledge of college planning and preparation activities, and the self-assessed importance of such activities. In addition, it was argued that completing the CPK questionnaire would help the high school Guidance Department know how help the students and their parents prepare for college.

It was hoped that student ownership for the follow-through of the CPK questionnaire completion process would enhance and orient the students actively to the tasks of college preparation and planning more effectively. To try and buttress student awareness and engagement, I filmed a video of the teaching, counseling, and administrative staff identifying their names, departments, and where they went to college, while wearing a tee-shirt or sweatshirt of where they had graduated from college. This video was shown in segments during the week after the student meetings, where the Parent Consent Forms had been provided to the students, to provide a daily reminder to students as to the purpose of the study and the expected deadlines.

Also, the identification of the array of colleges by the faculty and of “who went where,” provided to interested students a face of a staff member attached to a collegiate place. It was hoped this might lead to further conversations about college between students and staff, and

enhance the importance of following through with the CPK questionnaire. The video voluntarily attained about 70% of faculty participation, demonstrating that the professional staff saw this study as worthy of support.

A deadline of November 30<sup>th</sup> was established for having the Parent Consent Forms returned and the CPK questionnaire completed by parents and students. As of February 3, 2010, only 38 parents and 20 students had completed the CPK questionnaire. At that point, several contingency plans were reviewed with both the dissertation advisors and the high school administration. I decided to spend the first three weeks of February calling parents and students at home at night to encourage participation in the CPK questionnaire. The families that were called were those who had either already returned the Parent Consent Form but who had not yet completed the CPK questionnaire or those families with high school students who had taken the PSAT.

In all approximately 120 phone calls were made during this time period (I either talked with parents and students or left a detailed voicemail with instructions of how to proceed). In addition to these phone calls, two follow-up emails were sent to each family that had returned a Parent Consent Form, on top of the initial email sending the CPK questionnaire links to these families. The student meetings, parent letter, and emails were not nearly as effective in enlisting participation as the personal phone calls to parents at night. Ultimately, with all of these procedures having been completed, there were 80 parents who completed the questionnaire (28 who were college graduates and 52 who were not college graduates) and 53 students (24 whose parents had attended college and 29 whose parents had not attended college). Demographic data on these subjects are presented in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4

### Results

#### *Introduction*

The first purpose of this study was to analyze the responses to the CPK questionnaire among four groups in terms of understanding and importance. These groups were: (a) parents who are college graduates (Parents College); (b) parents who are not college graduates (Parents Non-College); (c) students whose parents are college graduates (Students College); and, (d) students whose parents are not college graduates (Students Non-College).

The second purpose of this study was to expand this analysis by comparing the four groups listed above to a group of high school counselors. The focus of this analysis was to compare the five groups in terms of their perceived importance for the items on the CPK questionnaire.

A number of different approaches were taken in analyzing the data. Since the CPK questionnaire was designed specifically for this study, its psychometric properties are not completely known. As such, it seemed reasonable to analyze both the individual questions on the questionnaire as well as the hypothesized sub-scales. Since the number of questions is large, these analyses are presented in this chapter in a shortened form to simplify the presentation. Where sub-scale analyses are appropriate, these analyses are presented along with the analysis of the individual questions.

*Demographic Characteristics of the Sample*

The demographic data (Table 4.1) on the families who completed the CPK questionnaire are presented in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1. CPK Questionnaire Respondents**

Group	Gr. 12	Gr. 11	Gr. 10	Gr. 9	Parent/Guard I.D.	Total (n)
Parent (Coll. Grad)	4 (14%)	5 (18%)	14 (50%)	5 (18%)	Bio Dad – 8 Bio Mom – 19 Adopt Dad – 1 Sis/Bro – 1	28 (100%)
Parent (Non- Coll. Grad)	8 (15%)	11 (21%)	17 (33%)	16 (31%)	Bio Dad – 11 Bio Mom – 40 Step-Dad 1	52 (100%)
Student (Par. Coll. Grad)	1 (4%)	6 (25%)	11 (46%)	6 (25%)	N/A	24 (100%)
Student (Par. Non.Coll. Grad)	1 (3%)	6 (21%)	11 (38%)	11 (38%)	N/A	29 (100%)

Racially, the high school population is approximately ten percent Black. In this study, the participation of Black families in the CPK questionnaire was approximately four percent. Hispanic family participation was one percent. Another group with low participation was the 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Only about 3% of the college-bound students who completed the CPK questionnaire were in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. As shown in Table 4.1, approximately twice as many college-educated mothers as college-educated fathers completed the CPK questionnaire. For parents not without four year college degrees, that ratio became approximately four times for mothers as compared to fathers to complete the CPK questionnaire.

I understood ahead of time that getting participation from seniors would be a challenge. Many of them with college plans would not perceive participation as being personally helpful as their college planning was already either past or well on its way with the application process already largely completed. The lower rate of participation was also found to be the case with parents who had only a senior in the high school.

As shown in Table 4.1, 80 parents (28 college graduates, 52 non- college graduates) and 53 students (24 whose parents were college graduates, 29 whose parents were not college graduates) completed the CPK questionnaire. By the time the CPK questionnaire closed, 139 Parent Consent Forms had been returned with about 50 of these families never following through with the CPK questionnaire completion.

#### *Research Question # 1*

The first Research Question was, “What views do parents and students have about the importance of the areas/questions contained in the CPK questionnaire? What are the views of parents and high school students about their self-perceived understanding of the areas/questions contained in the CPK questionnaire?” This question was answered descriptively.

Generally, I thought that if an item was considered by three or more groups as either a top ten item of importance (or not important) or understood (or not understood), this occurrence should be particularly important for school counselors to note. Whether the school counselor actually agreed with the rankings is of secondary importance.

The means for all of the items by group are presented in Appendix D. To simplify the presentation in this chapter, the top ten items and lowest ten items of Importance, by group, are

presented in Table 4.2 and the lowest ten and highest ten items for Knowledge are presented in Table 4.3. The items in **bold type** were shared by three or more groups.

**Table 4.2. Highest and Lowest Item Means for Importance by Group**

**A. Parents College**

Highest Ranked Items Importance		Lowest Ranked Items Importance	
#1) Q7: Knowing what college preparatory classes to take in high school	3.93	<b>Q52: How to apply for non-standard administration (IEP students)</b>	2.50
<b>#2) Q68: How to find and apply for scholarships</b>	3.89	<b>Q53: How much the SAT/ACT costs</b>	2.67
#3) Q10: Knowing a timeline of when to do what in Grades 9-12 regarding college planning steps	3.86	<b>Q54: How to qualify for and receive a fee waiver to SAT/ACT, PSAT, and AP exams</b>	2.79
#4) Q11: Helping students develop time management, organizational, test-taking, note-taking, and study-skills	3.86	<b>Q19: Going to college fairs</b>	2.89
<b>#5) Q58: The cost of attending college (tuition, room and board, books, etc.)</b>	3.86	Q64: How an independent student status is determined	2.96
#6) Q44: When to take the SAT/ACT	3.79	<b>Q23: Understanding the social life of college</b>	3.00
#7) Q73: Importance of interests when deciding what to major in while in college	3.79	<b>Q12: Understanding the differences among highly-selective, selective, and non-selective colleges</b>	3.04
<b>#8) Q29: When students should apply to college</b>	3.75	<b>Q31: How applications can differ in length, complexity, and other aspects</b>	3.04
#9) Q62: When the FAFSA should be filed	3.75	Q14: The importance of extra-curricular activities	3.11
#10) Q72: Understanding one's abilities in making career development choices	3.75	<b>Q32: Process for filing electronically versus filing the paper application</b>	3.14

Again, note that the items in **bold type** were shared by three or more groups. There is a trend where it is the case that there are more items being shared in common in the "Lowest Ranked Items of Importance" versus the "Highest Ranked Items of Importance."

**B. (Table 4.2. continued): Parents Non-College**

Highest Ranked Items Importance		Lowest Ranked Items Importance	
#1) <b>Q68: How to find and apply for scholarships</b>	3.87	<b>Q14: The importance of extra-curricular activities</b>	2.96
#2) Q77: How to find employment	3.83	<b>Q53: How much the SAT/ACT costs</b>	3.00
#3) <b>Q69: How to avoid scholarship scams</b>	3.83	<b>Q54: How to qualify for and receive a fee waiver to SAT/ACT, PSAT, and AP exams</b>	3.02
#4) <b>Q65: Types of financial aid (grants, loans, scholarships, work/study)</b>	3.83	<b>Q52: How to apply for non-standard administration (IEP students)</b>	3.10
#5) <b>Q58: The cost of attending college (tuition, room and board, books, etc.)</b>	3.80	<b>Q32: Process for filing electronically versus filing the paper application</b>	3.10
#6) <b>Q29: When students should apply to college</b>	3.76	<b>Q19: Going to college fairs</b>	3.13
#7) Q22: Understanding the academic demands of college	3.76	<b>Q12: Understanding the differences among highly-selective, selective, and non-selective colleges</b>	3.13
# 8) Q7: Knowing what college preparatory classes to take in high school	3.75	<b>Q31: How applications can differ in length, complexity, and other aspects</b>	3.14
# 9) Q11: Helping students develop time management, organizational, test-taking, note-taking, and study-skills	3.73	<b>Q23: Understanding the social life of college</b>	3.16
#10 Q46: What is tested on the SAT/ACT	3.71	Q35: Early Decision issues	3.16

Once again, note that the items in **bold type** were shared by three or more groups. The trend continues where it is the case that there are more items being shared in common in the "Lowest Ranked Items of Importance" versus the "Highest Ranked Items of Importance."

**C. (Table 4.2. continued): Students College**

Highest Ranked Items Importance		Lowest Ranked Items Importance	
<b>#1) Q68: How to find and apply for scholarships</b>	3.79	<b>Q52: How to apply for non-standard administration (IEP students)</b>	2.42
#2) Q22: Understanding the academic demands of college	3.71	<b>Q32: Process for filing electronically versus filing the paper application</b>	2.46
<b>#3) Q69: How to avoid scholarship scams</b>	3.71	<b>Q23: Understanding the social life of college</b>	2.50
#4) Q20: Knowing what majors are offered at what colleges	3.67	<b>Q53: How much the SAT/ACT costs</b>	2.58
<b>#5) Q29: When students should apply to college</b>	3.67	<b>Q54: How to qualify for and receive a fee waiver to SAT/ACT, PSAT, and AP exams</b>	2.75
<b>#6) Q65: Types of financial aid (grants, loans, scholarships, work/study)</b>	3.67	<b>Q31: How applications can differ in length, complexity, and other aspects</b>	2.79
#7) Q16: Going to colleges for visits	3.58	<b>Q12: Understanding the differences among highly-selective, selective, and non-selective colleges</b>	2.79
#8) Q25: How to have a successful college interview	3.58	Q35: Early Decision issues	2.87
#9) Q74: Researching job trends in the world of employment	3.58	<b>Q19: Going to college fairs</b>	2.92
#10) Q9: When students should apply to college	3.54	Q43: How to sign up for PSAT	2.92

Finally, again, note that the items in **bold type** were shared by three or more groups. The trend is confirmed where it is the case that there are more items being shared in common in the "Lowest Ranked Items of Importance" versus the "Highest Ranked Items of Importance."

**D. (Table 4.2. continued): Students Non-College**

Highest Ranked Items Importance		Lowest Ranked Items Importance	
#1) <b>Q68: How to find and apply for scholarships</b>	3.93	<b>Q52: How to apply for non-standard administration (IEP students)</b>	2.76
#2) <b>Q69: How to avoid scholarship scams</b>	3.90	<b>Q19: Going to college fairs</b>	2.79
#3) Q20: Knowing what majors are offered at what colleges	3.86	<b>Q53: How much the SAT/ACT costs</b>	3.03
#4) Q25: How to have a successful college interview	3.86	<b>Q31: How applications can differ in length, complexity, and other aspects</b>	3.07
#5) Q46: What is tested on the SAT/ACT	3.86	Q28: How much time should be given to high school guidance departments to complete the various tasks related to the college application process	3.10
#6) <b>Q65: Types of financial aid (grants, loans, scholarships, work/study)</b>	3.79	<b>Q8: Understanding high school class weighting, class rank, and calculating GPA issues</b>	3.10
#7) Q73: Importance of interests when deciding what to major in while in college	3.79	<b>Q23: Understanding the social life of college</b>	3.10
#8) <b>Q58: The cost of attending college (tuition, room and board, books, etc.)</b>	3.76	<b>Q32: Process for filing electronically versus filing the paper application</b>	3.10
#9) Q71: Helping students decide what to major in when they go to college	3.76	Q13: Being informed about Advanced Placement courses	3.14
#10) Q72: Understanding one's abilities in making career development choices	3.72	<b>Q12: Understanding the differences among highly-selective, selective, and non-selective colleges</b>	3.17

There are a number of interesting similarities and differences demonstrated in Table 4.2.

Among these are the following:

- Question 68, “How to find and apply for scholarships” was rated as highly important by all groups. It was the only item that was in the top ten for all four groups.
- Question 7, “Knowing what college preparatory courses to take in high school” was ranked number one in importance by Parents College and in top ten importance by Parents Non-College. Neither Students group listed this as a top ten question in terms of importance.
- Both College Parents and Non-College Parents ranked Question 11, “Helping students develop time management, organizational, test-taking, note-taking, and study-skills” as a top ten item of importance whereas neither student group did.
- Both Non-College groups, parents and students, ranked Question 46, “What is tested on the SAT/ACT?” as a top ten item in importance whereas neither College group (parents and students) did so.
- All four groups ranked items centered on financially-related items such as tuition, financial aid and scholarships as important

There are a number of general comments about the data in Table 4.2 that should be mentioned. First, on the lowest ranked items of importance, typically the Parent College and Student College groups did not rank the items as high in importance across the board as the Parent Non-College and the Student Non-College groups. A ranking of “3” on the scale was ‘Important’ so even among the lowest ranked items in the questionnaire, the Parent Non-College and Student Non-College groups still thought most of the ranked items were important. Second, a common theme among all groups in regards to lowest importance involved the application-type

items. Finally, there was much higher agreement among the groups about what is not important, than what was considered important among the four groups. The second part of Research Question # 1 focused on the differences in understanding (or knowledge) of the items in terms of means for the four groups. These data are reported in Table 4.3. Again, the items in bold type were shared by three or more of the four groups.

**Table 4:3. Lowest and Highest Means for Understanding by Group**

**A. Parents - College**

Lowest Ranked Items Understood		Highest Ranked Items Understood	
#1) <b>Q127: How to apply for non-standard administration (IEP students)</b>	2.04	<b>Q86: Helping students develop time management, organizational, test-taking, note-taking, and study-skills</b>	3.39
#2) <b>Q139: How an independent student status is determined</b>	2.07	<b>Q152: How to find employment</b>	3.36
#3) <b>Q138: What the CSS/Financial Aid Profile is and when and why it should be filed</b>	2.21	<b>Q97: Understanding the academic demands of college</b>	3.32
#4) <b>Q129: How to qualify for and receive a fee waiver to SAT/ACT, PSAT, and AP exams</b>	2.21	Q147: Understanding one's abilities in making career development choices	3.30
#5) Q126: When students should take SAT II	2.21	<b>Q148: Importance of interests when deciding what to major in while in college</b>	3.29
#6) <b>Q141: How to appeal a financial aid award</b>	2.25	<b>Q153: Developing job-related skills such as interviewing and resume writing</b>	3.29
#7) <b>Q125: Purpose of the SAT II</b>	2.30	Q154: How to select references for employment	3.25
#8) <b>Q144: How to avoid scholarship scams</b>	2.43	Q93: Knowing the types of degrees colleges offer (Associate, B.A./B.S., Masters, Ph. D.)	3.25
#9) Q113: What are the students and parent/guardian rights in reviewing a recommendation	2.43	Q146: Helping students decide what to major in when they go to college	3.21
#10) Q108: Knowing about The Common Application	2.43	Q150: How values impact career selection	3.21

Again, the items in **bold type** were shared by three or more of the four groups. There appears to be significant agreement on those items all groups found to be least understood.

**B. (Table 4.3. continued): Parents Non-College**

Lowest Ranked Items Understood		Highest Ranked Items Understood	
<b>#1) Q127: How to apply for non-standard administration (IEP students)</b>	2.12	<b>Q:86 Helping students develop time management, organizational, test-taking, note-taking, and study-skills</b>	2.98
<b>#2) Q138: What the CSS/Financial Aid Profile is and when and why it should be filed</b>	2.14	Q154: How to select references for employment	2.98
<b>#3) Q141: How to appeal a financial aid award</b>	2.15	Q89: The importance of extra-curricular activities	2.94
<b>#4) Q129: How to qualify for and receive a fee waiver to SAT/ACT, PSAT, and AP exams</b>	2.18	<b>Q152: How to find employment</b>	2.92
<b>#5) Q139: How an independent student status is determined</b>	2.18	Q93: Knowing the types of degrees colleges offer (Associate, B.A./B.S., Masters, Ph. D.)	2.85
<b>#6) Q125: Purpose of the SAT II</b>	2.20	<b>Q148: Importance of interests when deciding what to major in while in college</b>	2.84
<b>#7) Q126: When students should take SAT II</b>	2.20	Q98: Understanding the social life of college	2.82
# 8) Q108: Knowing about The Common Application	2.22	Q150: How values impact career selection	2.82
<b># 9) Q144: How to avoid scholarship scams</b>	2.25	<b>Q153: Developing job-related skills such as interviewing and resume writing</b>	2.81
#10 Q143: How to find and apply for scholarships	2.30	<b>Q97: Understanding the academic demands of college</b>	2.81

Once again, the items in **bold type** were shared by three or more of the four groups. There appears to be significant agreement on those items all groups found to be the “Lowest Ranked Items Understood.” In comparison, there is not as much agreement on the “Highest Ranked Items Understood.”

**C. (Table 4.3. continued): Students College**

Lowest Ranked Items Understood		Highest Ranked Items Understood	
#1) Q136: What the FAFSA looks at income and asset-wise	2.08	Q88: Being informed about Advanced Placement courses	3.17
#2) Q137: When the FAFSA should be filed	2.17	<b>Q86: Helping students develop time management, organizational, test-taking, note-taking, and study-skills</b>	3.17
#3) Q135: How to complete the FAFSA Financial Aid form	2.17	Q133: The cost of attending college (tuition, room and board, books, etc.)	3.13
<b>#4) Q138: What the CSS/Financial Aid Profile is and when and why it should be filed</b>	2.29	<b>Q97: Understanding the academic demands of college</b>	3.09
<b>#5) Q127: How to apply for non-standard administration (IEP students)</b>	2.33	<b>Q148: Importance of interests when deciding what to major in while in college</b>	3.08
<b>#6) Q129: How to qualify for and receive a fee waiver to SAT/ACT, PSAT, and AP exams</b>	2.37	Q82: Knowing what college preparatory classes to take in high school	3.08
#7) Q126: When students should take SAT II	2.37	Q117: Why to take the PSAT	3.08
<b>#8) Q139: How an independent student status is determined</b>	2.42	Q116: When to take the PSAT	3.08
#9) Q134: How the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is determined	2.42	Q85: Knowing a timeline of when to do what in Grades 9-12 regarding college planning steps	3.08
<b>#10) Q125: Purpose of the SAT II</b>	2.42	Q83: Understanding high school class weighting, class rank, and calculating GPA issues	3.04

Finally, again, the items in **bold type** were shared by three or more of the four groups. There appears to be significant agreement confirmed on those items all groups found to be the “Lowest Ranked Items Understood.” Again, in comparison, there is not as much agreement on the “Highest Ranked Items Understood.”

**D. (Table 4.3. continued): Students Non-College**

Lowest Ranked Items Understood		Highest Ranked Items Understood	
#1) <b>Q127: How to apply for non-standard administration (IEP students)</b>	2.07	Q89: The importance of extra-curricular activities	3.24
#2) <b>Q138: What the CSS/Financial Aid Profile is and when and why it should be filed</b>	2.10	<b>Q86: Helping students develop time management, organizational, test-taking, note-taking, and study-skills</b>	3.10
#3) <b>Q144: How to avoid scholarship scams</b>	2.14	Q120: Why to take the SAT/ACT	2.93
#4) Q137: When the FAFSA should be filed	2.21	Q117: Why to take the PSAT	2.93
#5) <b>Q141: How to appeal a financial aid award</b>	2.24	Q112: Importance of recommendations by teachers	2.90
#6) Q136: What the FAFSA looks at income and asset-wise	2.24	Q82: Knowing what college preparatory classes to take in high school	2.90
#7) Q135: How to complete the FAFSA Financial Aid form	2.24	<b>Q153: Developing job-related skills such as interviewing and resume writing</b>	2.89
#8) Q126: When students should take SAT II	2.24	<b>Q148: Importance of interests when deciding what to major in while in college</b>	2.89
#9) <b>Q139: How an independent student status is determined</b>	2.28	<b>Q152: How to find employment</b>	2.86
#10) <b>Q125: Purpose of the SAT II</b>	2.28	Q99: The factors considered in college admissions (grades/coursework, standardized test scores, extra-curr. etc)	2.86

It is evident from Table 4.3 that questions focusing on testing or financial issues were the least understood by all four of the groups. Parent groups, both College and Non-College, tended to rank the items related to Careers as most understood. With the Student College and Student

Non-College groups, Question 82, “Knowing what college preparatory classes to take in high school.” was a well-understood item.

When comparing the importance and understanding Tables (4.2 and 4.3) for all four groups, the combination of “most important” and “least understood” items, Question 69/144 “How to avoid scholarship scams” was almost unanimously identified as both more important and less understood. Financial items in general shared this characteristic among the groups more often than other items and areas.

In the “Highest Ranked Items Understood” table (Table 4:3), both the Student College and Student Non-College groups indicated that they understood Question 82, “Knowing what college preparatory classes to take in high school” while neither Parent-College or Parent Non-College did so. In addition, the Parent-College group identified the same item, Question 7, in the importance section, as the most important item.

While the Parent-College and Parent Non-College groups identified Question 11, “Helping students develop time management, organizational, test-taking, note-taking, and study skills” as important, all four groups indicated a high degree of understanding of this item.

As another way of describing the data, the questions in each section of the questionnaire were summed and sub-scale scores were computed. These data are presented in Table 4.4. This Table 4.4 provides a comprehensive view of the areas of CPK and identifies and confirms findings perhaps already seen in the previous Tables but where a broad view of the Importance and Understanding rankings is global and as such makes the comparison among the groups and the areas of items significantly clearer.

**Table 4:4. Highest Importance Item Means and Lowest Understood Item Means**

Importance	Parents-College Mean	Parents Non-Coll Mean	St.- Coll Mean	St. - Non-Coll Mean
#1	<b>Costs 3.60</b>	<b>Costs 3.67</b>	Career 3.37	<b>Costs 3.55</b>
#2	Career 3.56	Career 3.57	<b>Costs 3.36</b>	Career 3.54
#3	Prep. 3.54	Res. 3.50	Res. 3.33	Res. 3.49
#4	Res. 3.43	Test. 3.48	Prep. 3.26	Test. 3.43
#5	Test. 3.38	Prep. 3.48	Apply 3.17	Prep. 3.34
#6	Apply 3.35	Apply 3.38	Test. 3.05	Apply 3.31
Understanding				
#1	<b>Costs 2.58</b>	<b>Costs 2.37</b>	<b>Costs 2.53</b>	<b>Costs 2.37</b>
#2	Test. 2.66	Test. 2.46	Apply 2.71	Apply. 2.54
#3	Apply 2.77	Apply 2.51	Test 2.77	Test 2.61
#4	Prep. 2.95	Prep. 2.66	Res. 2.83	Res. 2.65
#5	Res. 2.99	Res. 2.68	Career 2.90	Career 2.75
#6	Career 3.17	Career 2.78	Prep. 3.04	Prep. 2.89

As shown in Table 4.4, all four groups list Career and Costs as the two areas of most importance. Interestingly, however, all four groups list Costs as the area that they least understand. The data in Table 4.4 also show that Testing was ranked quite a bit higher in importance for students whose parents did not graduate from college than for those students whose parents did graduate from college. Even the lowest area in Importance (Apply) and the highest area in Understanding (Career or Prep) were considered important to know and to be understood by all of the groups.

*Research Question # 2*

Research Question 2 asked whether there would be significant differences in the views of parents and high school students about the importance of the areas/questions of the CPK questionnaire. Research Question 2 also asked whether there would be significantly different views of parents and high school students about their self-perceived understanding of the

areas/items of the CPK questionnaire. In essence, Question 2 changes from a descriptive analysis of the similarities and differences among the groups, to an inferential analysis.

Two approaches were taken to answer this question. As an initial analysis, the data were analyzed by two series of univariate t-tests, the first comparing the parents who had graduated from college to the parents who had not graduated from college and the second comparing the students whose parents had graduated from college to the students whose parents had not graduated from college. These univariate analyses were conducted on all of the items from the questionnaire to provide a detailed analysis of the data. After the t-tests, a multivariate discriminant function analysis was computed to compare all four groups on the items from the questionnaire on all of the questions at one time.

*Parents-College versus Parents Non-College: Importance Ratings*

Only three questions were found to be significantly different in terms of importance ratings between these two groups. These data are presented in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5. Significant Differences between Parents-College and Parents Non-College in Importance Ratings**

Item	Mean Parents College	Mean Parents Non-College	t	Significance
Q52: How to apply for non-standard administration (IEP students)	2.50	3.10	2.72	.008**
Q64: How an Ind. Stud. status is det.	2.96	3.50	2.98	.004**
Q77 How to find emp.	3.56	3.83	2.21	.034*

\* significant at .05 level \*\* significant at .01 level \*\*\* significant at .001 level

As shown in Table 4.5, on all three of the items where a significant difference was discovered in importance the means of the Non-College Parents were higher. In referring back to Table 4.2, these parents ranked Question 77, “How to find employment” in their top ten of most important items whereas College Parents did not. Considering that only three of the 82 t-tests were significant, it can generally be concluded that the two parent groups do not differ markedly in these importance ratings.

*Parents-College versus Parents Non-College: Understanding Ratings*

Seventeen questions were found to be significantly different in terms of understanding ratings between these two groups. These data are presented in Table 4.6

**Table 4.6. Significant Differences between Parents-College and Parents Non-College in Understanding Ratings**

Item	Mean Parents College	Mean Parents Non-College	T	Sig.
Q82: Knowing what college preparatory classes to take in high school	3.07	2.62	2.92	.005**
Q83: Understanding high school class weighting, class rank, and calculating GPA issues	3.04	2.62	2.93	.005**
Q86: Helping students develop time management and etc.	3.39	2.98	2.58	.012*
Q88: Being informed about Advanced Placement courses	2.82	2.43	2.09	.040*
Q93: Knowing the types of deg coll. Offer	3.25	2.85	2.35	.021*

(Table 4.6. continued) Item	Mean Parents College	Mean Parents Non-College	T	Sig.
Q97: Understanding the academic demands of college	3.32	2.81	3.13	.002**
Q99: The factors considered in college admission	2.96	2.59	2.20	.032*
109: Understanding what is on a high school transcript	3.07	2.55	3.14	.002**
Q110: Early Decision issues	2.82	2.36	2.91	.005**
Q131: The effectiveness of SAT/ACT prep prog.	2.71	2.31	2.36	.021*
Q146: Helping students decide what to major in when they go to college	3.21	2.68	3.28	.002**
Q147: Understanding one's abilities in making career development choices	3.30	2.76	3.12	.003**
Q148: Importance of interests when deciding what to major in while in college	3.29	2.84	2.65	.010**
Q149: Researching job trends in the world of employment	3.07	2.68	2.30	.025*
Q150: How values impact career selection	3.21	2.82	2.19	.031*
152: How to find employment	3.36	2.92	2.55	.013*
153: Developing job-related skills such as interviewing and resume writing	3.29	2.81	2.45	.017*

\* significant at .05 level \*\* significant at .01 level \*\*\* significant at .001 level

As shown in Table 4.6, there were many more items where there was a significant difference in means between the Parent College and the Parent Non-College groups in regards to understanding than there were previously with importance. As a rule, the Parent Non-College Group means were lower. Since a large number of comparisons were significant in these analyses, it is reasonable to conclude that parents who had attended college are probably more knowledgeable than parents who had not attended college.

*Students College versus Students Non-College: Importance Ratings*

Eleven questions were found to be significantly different in terms of importance ratings between these two groups. These data are presented in Table 4.7

**Table 4.7. Significant Differences between Students-College and Students Non-College in Importance Ratings**

Item	Mean Students College	Mean Students Non-College	t	Sig
Q23: Understanding the social life of college	2.50	3.10	3.28	.002**
Q25: How to have a successful college interview	3.58	3.86	2.05	.047*
Q32: Process for filing electronically	2.46	3.10.	3.51	.001***
Q42: Why to take the PSAT	3.08	3.52	2.34	.023*
Q45: When to take the SAT/ACT	3.21	3.62	2.61	.012*
Q46: What tested SAT/ACT	3.42	3.86	2.78	.009**
Q47: How to reg. SAT/ACT	3.08	3.48	2.25	.029*
Q48: How many times the SAT/ACT should be taken	3.08	3.59	2.85	.006**
Q49: How SAT/ACT scored	3.29	3.69	2.26	.023*
Q50: Purpose of the SAT II	2.92	3.45	2.75	.008**
Q51: When students SAT II's	2.96	3.45	2.41	.021*

\* significant at .05 level \*\* significant at .01 level \*\*\* significant at .001 level

All but three of the items that were significantly different in importance arose from the Testing area. Out of the 16 questions listed in the Testing area of the CPK questionnaire eight of these questions were found to have significantly different means between the Student College and the Student Non-College groups. In all of items above where there was a significant difference, the Student Non-College group had higher means. There was only one item ranked in the “Highest Ranked Items Importance” tables (Table 4.2, C and D) Q25 “How to have a successful college interview” that also was listed as significantly different in means in Table 4.7 between the Student College and Student Non-College Groups. Question 46 “What is tested on the SAT/ACT,” was significantly different in means between the Student College and the Student Non-College groups, but only the Student Non-College listed this item as a ranked importance item.

*Student College versus Students Non-College: Understanding Ratings*

Only one item was found to be significantly different in Understanding between these two groups. These data are presented in Table 4.8

**Table 4.8. Significant Differences between Student College and Student Non-College in Understanding Ratings**

Item	Mean Student College	Mean Student Non-College	T	Sig
Q104: When students should apply to college	3.00	2.48	2.31	.025*

\* significant at .05 level

*Discriminant Function Analysis: Importance Questions*

A four-group discriminant function analysis was computed comparing all four groups on the importance items of the questionnaire. This analysis was conducted to account for the large number of analyses reported in the sections above. This analysis produced two functions that were significant (Wilks Lambda for Function 1 = .014,  $p = .000$ , canonical correlation squared = .135; Wilks Lambda for Function 2 = .090,  $p = .010$ , canonical correlation squared = .022). Since only the first function accounts for a meaningful amount of the variance, it will be the only function described. Function 1 consists primarily of Questions 23, 32, 50 and 48. The group centroid matrix is presented in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9. Group Centroids for Function 1**

Group	Function 1
Parent College	.182
Parent Non-College	1.303
Student College	-4.210
Student Non-College	1.692

As shown in Table 4.9, function 1 basically discriminates the Student College group from the other three groups. The means for the dominant questions are presented in Table 4.10.

**Table 4.10. Means for the Dominant Items for the Discriminant Function Analysis**

Item	Parents-College	Parents Non-Coll	Students College	Students Non-Col
Question 23: Understanding the social life of college.	3.00	3.16	2.50	2.90
Q32: Process for filing electronically	3.14	3.10	2.46	3.10
Q50: Purpose of the SAT II	3.37	3.50	2.92	3.45
Q48: How many times the SAT should be taken	3.43	3.64	3.08	3.21

As shown in Table 4.10 the students whose parents had attended college rate each of the items as less in importance as compared to the remaining three groups.

*Discriminant Function Analysis: Understanding Questions*

A four-group discriminant function analysis was computed comparing all four groups on the understanding items of the questionnaire. The discriminant function analysis produced one significant function (Wilks Lamda = .008,  $p = .004$ , canonical correlation squared = .028). The structure matrix indicated that the dominant items from the questionnaire were Questions 87, 113, and 126. The group centroid for this function is presented in Table 4.11

**Table 4.11. Group Centroids for Function 1**

Group	Function 1
Parent College	2.899
Parent Non-College	1.561
Student College	-3.927
Student Non-College	-1.963

The means for the relevant items, by group, are presented in Table 4:12

**Table 4.12. Means for the Dominant Items for the Discriminant Function Analysis**

Item	Parents-College	Parents Non-Coll	Students College	Students Non-Coll
Q87: Understanding the differences among highly-selective, selective, and non-selective colleges	2.48	2.41	2.83	2.55
Q113: What are the students and parent/guardian rights in reviewing a recommendation	2.43	2.46	2.67	2.55
Q126: When students should take SAT II	2.21	2.20	2.38	2.24

It is evident from the results of the discriminate function analysis that the dominant difference is between parents and students and that the students think they have more knowledge about these areas than their parents. In general, however, the results from this analysis indicate that the groups are not markedly different in their knowledge. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that the one significant function accounted for only approximately 3% of the variance.

*Research Question # 3*

*Discriminant Function Analysis: Importance Questions*

The third research question focused on the differences between the school counselors' importance ratings as compared to the other four groups.

To answer this question, two analyses were conducted. First, a five-group discriminant function analysis was performed comparing the school counselors to the parents and students on the importance items. Two of the functions were statistically significant (Wilks Lamda for Function 1 = .006,  $p = .000$ , canonical correlation squared = .144; Wilks Lamda for Function 2 = .048,  $p = .000$ , canonical correlation squared = .091). The structure matrix indicated that items 77, 50, 25, 16 (with a negative loading), 67 and 66 formed Function 1, while items 47, 23, 45, 32, and 44 formed Function 2. The group centroid matrix is presented in Table 4.13, and the table of means for the two significant functions is presented in Table 4.14.

**Table 4.13. Group Centroids for Function 1**

Group	Function 1	Function 2
Parents College	-1.292	.572
Parents Non-College	-.856	1.318
Students College	-.106	.304
Students Non-College	-2.321	.484
School Counselors	5.938	-.632

**Table 4.14. Relevant Means for the Significant Functions**

A. Function 1

Item	Parents College	Parents Non-Coll	Students College	Students Non-Coll.	School Coun.
Q77: How to find employment	3.56	3.83	3.46	3.72	2.93
Q50: Purpose of the SAT II	3.37	3.50	2.92	3.45	3.23
Q25: How to have a successful coll. int.	3.54	3.65	3.58	3.86	3.03
Q16: Going to colleges for visits	3.71	3.58	3.58	3.45	3.96
Q67: Repayment issues on school loans	3.43	3.62	3.25	3.52	3.07
Q66: How to appeal a fin. aid award	3.29	3.58	3.29	3.54	2.90

B. Function 2

Item	Parents College	Parents Non-Coll	Students College	Students Non-Coll.	School Coun.
Q47: How to register for SAT/ACT	3.63	3.59	3.08	3.48	3.46
Q23: Und. the social life of college	3.00	3.16	2.50	3.10	2.90
Q45: Why to take the SAT/ACT	3.68	3.63	3.21	3.62	3.62
Q32: Process for filing electronically	3.14	3.10	2.46	3.10	2.69
Q44: When to take the SAT/ACT	3.79	3.69	3.33	3.62	3.79

The most reasonable interpretation of Function 1 is that it distinguishes School Counselors from the other four groups, although there is less difference for Students College. As shown in Table 4.14 A, the counselors perceive all these questions as less important than either the parents or the students. Function 2 seems to primarily discriminate students whose parents had attended college from the other four groups. These students consider all of the questions as less important the remaining groups.

The second analysis for Question # 3 used a one-way MANOVA for the six areas contained in the CPK. The omnibus Wilks Lambda was highly significant ( $p = .000$ , partial eta squared = .073). The follow-up univariate ANOVAs are listed in Table 4.15.

The areas that were most significantly different were: (in order from most significantly different to least): (a) Testing; (b) Costs; (c) Application; (d) Prepare; and (e) Career. The only area where there were not significant differences was for Research.

**Table 4.15. Results of the Univariate Follow-Up Analysis**

Area	<u>Df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig</u>
Prepare	4	2.525	.043*
Research	4	.876	.480
Application	4	3.236	.014*
Testing	4	4.824	.001***
Costs	4	4.368	.002**
Career	4	2.457	.046*

\* significant at .05 level \*\* significant at .01 level \*\*\* significant at .001 level

#### 4.16. Means for the Areas by Group

Area	Parents College	Parents Non-Coll	Students College	Students Non-Coll.	Sch. Coun
Prepare	28.25	27.65	26.08	26.73	26.70
Research	34.10	34.92	33.33	34.92	33.40
Application	43.05	43.56	41.28	42.85	39.95
Testing	54.90	55.58	48.83	54.23	51.95
Costs	39.65	40.71	37.29	38.88	37.50
Careers	35.40	35.58	33.71	35.15	33.00

It is evident from Table 4.16 that the difference between the groups is complex. Specifically, there is no evidence of a consistent pattern, nor is there evidence that the counselors are distinctly different from the remaining groups. As mentioned previously, it was predicted that

the counselors would be most similar to the parents who had attended college. There is little evidence in Table 4.16 that this is correct.

*Importance: Ranked Order Means of all Five Groups*

Table 4.17 below expanded the previously listed Table 4.2 top ten means of the groups to also show the school counselors' top ten means. Table 4.17 shows that what school counselors think are the top ten ranked questions in order of importance for college-bound students to know were not parallel to the perceptions of the parents or students.

**Table 4.17. Importance Items Mean Ranking for All Five Groups**

PColl Q# Top Ten Highest	PColl Mean	PNColl Q# Top Ten Highest	PNColl Mean	StPColl Q# Top Ten Highest	StPColl Mean	StPNColl Q# Top Ten Highest	StPNColl Mean	Counselor Top Ten Highest	Counselor Mean
<b>#1) Q7</b>	3.93	<b>#1) Q68</b>	3.87	<b>#1) Q68</b>	3.79	<b>#1) Q68</b>	3.93	<b>#1 Q16</b>	3.96
<b>#2) Q68</b>	3.89	<b>#2) Q77</b>	3.83	<b>#2) Q22</b>	3.71	<b>#2) Q69</b>	3.90	<b># 2 Q7</b>	3.83
<b>#3) Q10</b>	3.86	<b>#3) Q69</b>	3.83	<b>#3) Q69</b>	3.71	<b>#3) Q20</b>	3.86	<b># 3 Q22</b>	3.83
<b>#4) Q11</b>	3.86	<b>#4) Q65</b>	3.83	<b>#4) Q20</b>	3.67	<b>#4) Q25</b>	3.86	<b>#4 Q21</b>	3.79
<b>#5) Q58</b>	3.86	<b>#5) Q58</b>	3.80	<b>#5) Q29</b>	3.67	<b>#5) Q46</b>	3.86	<b># 5 Q44</b>	3.79
<b>#6) Q44</b>	3.79	<b>#6) Q29</b>	3.76	<b>#6) Q65</b>	3.67	<b>#6) Q65</b>	3.79	<b># 6 Q60</b>	3.72
<b>#7) Q73</b>	3.79	<b>#7) Q22</b>	3.76	<b>#7) Q16</b>	3.58	<b>#7) Q73</b>	3.79	<b># 7 Q68</b>	3.72
<b>#8) Q29</b>	3.75	<b># 8) Q7</b>	3.75	<b>#8) Q25</b>	3.58	<b>#8) Q58</b>	3.76	<b>#8 Q24</b>	3.69
<b>#9) Q62</b>	3.75	<b># 9) Q11</b>	3.73	<b>#9) Q74</b>	3.58	<b>#9) Q70</b>	3.76	<b>#9 Q65</b>	3.69
<b>#10) Q72</b>	3.75	<b>#10) Q46</b>	3.71	<b>#10) Q9</b>	3.54	<b>#10) Q72</b>	3.72	<b>#10 Q11</b>	3.66

There are a number of interesting findings in Table 4.16.

- **Q16** Going to colleges for visits. Only Student College shared this as a top ten with school counselors.
- **Q7** Knowing what college preparatory classes to take in high school. Parent College and Parent Non-College shared this with school counselors as a top ten. Student College and Student Non-College did not.

- **Q 22** Understanding the academic demands of college. Parent Non-College and Student College shared this with school counselors.
- **Q 21** Finding a good fit to a college. No groups shared this as a top ten with the school counselors.
- **Q 44** When to take the SAT. Only Parent College shared this with school counselors.
- **Q 60** How to complete the FAFSA. No groups shared this as a top ten with the school counselors.
- **Q 68** How to find and apply for scholarships. Parent College, Parent Non-College, Student College, and Student Non-College all shared this with the school counselors.
- **Q 24** Factors considered in college admissions. No groups shared this in common with school counselors.
- **Q 65** Types of financial aid. Parent Non-College, Student College, and Student Non-College had this in the top ten.
- **Q 11** Helping students develop time management, organizational, etc. Parent College and Parent Non-College shared this as a top ten with school counselors

To summarize school counselors are most like the Student College group in the importance ratings. Both groups ranked the items and areas generally lower in importance. The ranked means showed the school counselors putting importance on items that other the groups did not. In understanding, it was parent groups and student groups being most alike.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

#### *Introduction*

When thinking about topics for potential dissertations, I decided to focus on the critical, difficult, and complex issues of college preparation and planning, of what I have seen as a high school counselor for close to twenty years, and what the research indicated were the problems with college preparation and planning. Once deciding to research this topic, I wanted to investigate promising avenues to address such problems. There were three core principles that guided me.

The first principle was that parents and college-bound high school children should work together on college preparation and planning. Parents play the crucial role and need to cooperatively collaborate consistently with their college-bound children in the process, neither doing too much or too little. These high school students are responsible, too, to assume a degree of direct control with all aspects of the college preparation and planning process. Authoritative parenting of adolescents requires an understanding of the balance required between this too much and too little spectrum, and also necessitates that parents become informed about college preparation and planning topics, so that they can successfully guide their high school college-bound children.

Second, high school counselors play an important role in empowering parents and students in this college preparation and planning process. Our role is to facilitate the knowledge and understanding of these parents and college-bound students, but not do college preparation and planning for them. This, “College Preparation Knowledge” seemed to be the right issue to

focus on in terms of empowerment, with the idea that what people know can only help them, and what they don't know will most certainly hurt them.

After acknowledging the problems with college preparation and planning, the importance of parenting in this process, and then coming to the conclusion that “College Preparation Knowledge” was a key to unlocking the door to college access and success, I had to think through how to convey such CPK. Developing a comprehensive and confidential assessment for college-bound students and their parents that identified the major areas of college preparation and planning seemed to be logical and appropriate.

I endeavored to think and do research along the line of what these college-bound students and their parents needed to know. It was not necessary to try and make this audience de facto school counselors, but parents and college-bound students did have to attain a level of competent proficiency and understanding of these areas. I thought that comparisons among the differing major groups (Parents who graduated from college, parents who did not graduate from college, students whose parents had graduated from college, students whose parents had not graduated from college, and high school counselors) to see what was thought to be important and understood about college knowledge, would be an appropriate way to determine priorities for college preparation and planning. I wanted this research to have theoretical significance and practical benefits for our high school Guidance Department in our daily work.

In discussing the CPK questionnaire parent and student respondents (Table 4.1) there are some points worth considering. It was clear from the table that getting the parents of 12<sup>th</sup> graders--and especially 12<sup>th</sup> grade college-bound students themselves--to complete the College Preparation Knowledge questionnaire was unsuccessful. There seemed to be little motivation for

such seniors and their parents to complete the CPK questionnaire. Even by 11<sup>th</sup> grade, there was a significant drop-off in participation in the parents and students.

It would seem that the best time for the completion of the CPK questionnaire would be the in the tenth grade year as this is where the greatest number of both parents and students participated in completing the CPK questionnaire and it when school counselors recommend taking the PSAT. Another statistic to note is that non-college graduate parents were much more likely, at almost a 2:1 ratio, to complete the CPK questionnaire as compared to parents who had graduated from college.

The most unintended yet most interesting and perplexing finding of this study was that only 13 families whose children had taken the PSAT's returned the Parent Consent Form from the student meetings in November. From those student meetings, before the parent letter home was sent, a total of 73 families had returned the Parent Consent Form. I do not understand why this occurred. Maybe students who had taken the PSAT's, and their parents, already think that they both understand and know what is important about CPK.

When the CPK questionnaire was closed in March 2010, 31 of the families whose high school students had taken the PSAT's had also completed CPK questionnaire. It was clear that this completion was primarily the result of the phone calls and not the student meeting or the letter sent to the parent at home. Why there was not more overlap in these two audiences is unclear.

#### Research Question # 1

The first research question was concerned with the relative degree of importance and understanding of the various questions and topics in the CPK questionnaire demonstrated by the

parents and students. In reviewing the data in Table 4.3, a reasonable conclusion would seem to be that many of the questions listed as least understood were items that were relevant to a small sub-group of parents and students, but not generally relevant to all. These items pertained to a small fraction of parents and students who tended towards either the higher achieving and wealthier end of the college preparatory spectrum (Q138: What the CSS/Financial Aid Profile is and when and why it should be filed; and #7) Q125: Purpose of the SAT II) or the lower academic or socio-economic end of the spectrum (Q127: How to apply for non-standard administration (IEP students); Q139: How an independent student status is determined; and #4) Q129: How to qualify for and receive a fee waiver to SAT/ACT, PSAT, and AP exams).

A conclusion to be derived from this is that efforts need to be made to target parents and students who may be one of these types of specialized cases. Having these cases fall through the cracks because they are not a major concern of many does not at all minimize the importance and understanding issues where such considerations are crucial. For the vast majority of the students in the middle of the college preparatory distribution understanding these issues is not critical. However, for lower income students who need SAT fee-waivers, or students who need special accommodations based on IEP's, or for those higher-end students taking the SAT II and completing the CSS Profile, it is very critical for those specific families to do these things correctly and comprehensively. The majority of parents and students seemed to understand that these niche questions were not especially relevant to them, and rated them low in terms of importance. The one major exception to this would seem to be Question 144, "Understanding of how to avoid scholarship scams."

Parents and students are rightfully concerned about the importance of and needing to understand how to detect when a third party seeks to scam them with promises of "free money

for a fee” type of scenario. There are many unscrupulous operators in the college preparatory landscape who prey on peoples’ fears about money to swindle families. At best, most of these individuals and organizations offer information, resources, and services for a fee when these services are already available elsewhere for free. At worst, the scams can be costly, unprofessional, and even unethical. School counselors need to make sure we communicate how to get such information, resources, and services, without costs to parents and students.

While finishing this writing of the Dissertation, a parent contacted me and my sabbatical replacement school counselor by email regarding to “a scholarship scam” issue. See Appendix F for the exchange of emails (shared with parent permission). This email illustrates this problem perfectly and precisely.

Both parents and students should be concerned about Costs and Financial Aid issues (Table 4.2). It is not just something that the parents need to worry about as a responsibility. Paying back loans is often primarily the students’ responsibility. It was a positive finding of this study that all four groups ranked Costs as a higher area in importance but also indicated that their lower understanding (lowest of all six areas) of the Costs area needed to be addressed.

In reference to Table 4.4, the practical implications of having Costs (Financial Aid and Scholarships) being highest ranked area in terms of importance and the highest ranked least understood area for all four group would suggest that school counselors should tailor college preparation programming to address this primary concern of costs.

While all of the groups ranked the importance of Careers high, the groups also ranked it as the most understood area. What I have observed is that parents and students often have a good grasp of the elementary aspects of career development but often lack a comprehensive strategy

for discerning a college-bound students' career path. For example, the changing of the college major is a very common practice by students in college.

Some of the fears about careers can come out in the Costs area as in, "How do we know if getting a college degree will pay-off?" There are more reasons to get a college degree than enhancing a young adult's future earnings prospects, but this question is certainly a major concern, especially in these days of high college costs and economic downturn with significant unemployment.

### Research Question # 2

In reviewing the results for Research Question # 2: importance and understanding differences among the four groups (and later for Research Question #3: importance and understanding differences among the five groups), it was clear that the various groups were similar in some ways in terms of ratings of the CPK questionnaire. Yet, despite this commonality, it does not follow that each group needs the same types of information presented the same way in terms of depth and breadth. For example, Parents with college degrees ranked Costs and Financial Aid as their most important area, as did Parents without college degrees. Yet Parents College group typically have more sophisticated and less elementary questions about such an area than the Parents Non-College group. This was evidenced by the open-ended answers as the Parent College group typically had more advanced observations, questions, and comments (see Appendix E).

The understanding items also reflected this disparity. Research Questions 2 and 3 do much to further demonstrate both the differences and similarities among the four groups on the CPK questionnaire.

### *Parents: Significant Differences in Importance and Understanding*

Only three questions were found to be significantly different in importance between the parents who had graduated from college and the parents who had not graduated from college. These questions were (Table 4.5): (a) Question 52, “How to apply for non-standard testing administration IEP students”; (b) Question 64, “How an independent student status is determined”; and (c) Question 77, “How to find employment”. “How to find employment” was an issue of importance to both groups of parents. However, parents who did not graduate from college rated this higher and significantly different when compared to parents who had graduated from college. My experience as a school counselor confirms that parents who do not have college degrees often need more assurance that attending and graduating from college is going to be a good decision for their child in regarding increasing the probabilities of finding enhanced employment opportunities.

Non-standard SAT administration is a very important issue for parents who have students with IEP’s. Not getting appropriate information from high school Guidance Departments about such non-standard administration can be a violation of a student’s IEP and have educational and legal ramifications. On a practical level, a student who has a disability is denied the opportunity for appropriate accommodations and thus his or her performance scores on such tests would be much lower than their abilities and achievement. Sensible accommodations for IEP students can make a substantial difference. For most college-bound parents and their students, non-standard testing administration is not an issue of importance. Neither is the issue of how to attain Independent Student status. However, as mentioned above, this issue is critical for a small group

of students and their parents and should not be ignored simply because it is relevant to a small sub-population of students.

In regards to the parent groups the results confirmed what the research would have suggested: That parents who did not graduate from college would have less understanding and knowledge in general as compared to the parents who had graduated from college (see, for example, Table 4.6). These results would seem to be important to school counselors since they indicate the areas where there is the greatest need for programming and delivering services to parents, in general, and parents without a college degree in particular. One major implication of these findings might be to conduct two sessions at college planning and financial aid night for these two different audiences. One session could be for those without a deep understanding of the college admission process (i.e., a session probably aimed at parents and students without a college background); the other session could be aimed at parents and students with a much deeper degree of understanding which could cover far more advanced topics.

*Students: Significant Differences in Importance and Understanding*

The major insight derived from Table 4.4 and Table 4.7 pertained to the importance area and items of Testing on the CPK questionnaire. Testing was rated as higher in importance to students whose parents did not graduate from college as compared to those students whose parents had graduated from college. Although the students whose parents did not graduate from college saw themselves as having approximately as high an understanding of testing as students whose parents graduated from college (Table 4.8) they placed more importance on this area. This suggests that providing opportunities to such students to attend a presentation about Testing may assist those students whose parents did not graduate from college--a vulnerable student population in regards to collegiate success and graduation--to engage in a broader array of

college planning issues in general. It could be a good lead into other pertinent and important topics. In other words, it is an appropriate vehicle to open the discussion into the larger college planning process.

The other (non-Testing) items ranked as significantly different between the two student groups in importance were: (see Table 4.7) (a) Understanding the social life of college; (b) How to have a successful college interview; and (c) Process for filing electronically. The students who were from families whose parents did not graduate from college ranked these items as substantially more important than those students who were from families where parents had graduated from college. It would seem to follow that those students whose parents did not graduate from college would consider these items as more important as their familial and parent experiences with these issues are not first-hand. There could be an element of mystery surrounding such items.

There was only one question (Table 4.8) where the two student groups rated themselves as significantly different in regards to understanding. This was Question 104, “When to apply to college”. Some students really have no understanding of when to apply to college and by the time they get around to it, it is much too late to gain entrance. Yet, these same students also often have other issues in college preparation going on like not having taken the SAT’s, lower grades, not taking care of having the FAFSA filed, and a multitude of other complications. And these students are typically the children of parents who have not attended college.

### Research Question # 3

On an item-by-item analysis (Table 4.13), the group most significantly different from the school counselors was the Student Non-College group. This research helped confirm the

hypothesis that there are significant differences between the Student Non-College group and the school counselors. Additional and extra compensatory efforts have to be aimed at these students and their parents. When properly engaged, this group seemed serious in wanting to college approach college planning and preparation more seriously and in-depth.

The analysis of the sub-scales from the questionnaire (Table 4:15) showed that the five groups differed significantly in their responses on all but the Research area. However, there was no consistent pattern to these differences. This is especially important since Research Question # 3 was focused on finding out if the counselors were significantly different from any of the other four groups, and whether they were most similar to the Parent-College group. There was little evidence in the data to support this idea. It is important to recognize that there is really no common agreement about the ranking in importance of these items and areas.

#### *Importance Items Mean Ranking for All Five Groups*

Table 4:16 contained the group means for all of the groups “top ten” most important items/questions. The most obvious aspect of this table that is relevant to this study is that there was very little similarity between the rankings of the counselors and the rankings of the other four groups. This is very concerning and needs to be addressed. For instance, the school counselors ranked Question 21, “Finding a good fit for a college” as a top ten ranked item. No other group ranked this in their top ten. Another item, Question 60, “How to complete the FAFSA,” was not ranked in the top ten by any group except for the school counselors. One last item, Question 24, “Factors considered in college admissions” was also not ranked in any other groups’ top ten. Literally, for several of the most important items, school counselors and parents/students, are not on the same page.

### *Open Ended Questions*

At this end of the Discussion section it seemed an appropriate place to comment on the parents' and students' open-ended comments. Although harder to quantify due to the individual nature of the responses, it is apparent that parents and students were very thoughtful, observant, and honest, about what they submitted for consideration. Appendix E lists all of the responses. There were some major themes in the answers that centered on: (a) SAT issues (parents and students wanted more prep assistance with the SAT's); (b) Increasing the individual attention for each student on course and career planning; (c) Better communication of when to do what kind of things with college planning tasks; and (d) More flexibility with meetings and the like (e.g, perhaps we can put the videos of the meeting on-line).

### *Limitations*

As mentioned in Chapter 3, it was extremely difficult to convince the parents and students to complete the CPK questionnaire. The task of untangling the complex issues underlying this non-engagement defies simplistic solutions. No systematic attempt was made to discover why families did not complete the CPK questionnaire. Yet this non-engagement does show the even when a school counselor makes a serious investment and exerts substantial intelligence and energy to address college preparation and planning concerns that appear to be a serious issue and a great concern both locally and nationally, parent and student buy-in is not guaranteed.

### *Implications for Future Research*

Around the same time that this researcher began writing this *Results* section, the

organization *Public Agenda*, underwritten by the *Gates Foundation*, released a study titled “*Can I Get a Little Advice Here?*” which asked young Americans (ages 22 to 30) in a comprehensive national survey how much help they had personally received from their high school counselor when it came to selecting a college, determining a career path, and getting financial aid information for college, among other college preparation and planning questions (Johnson & Rochkind, 2010). The report noted, “Not much.” *Public Agenda* found that six out of ten of those who went to college gave their school counselors poor grades for their college counseling and nearly 50% stated that they felt “just like a face in the crowd.”

In the *Introduction* to the report, it was noted that “Well-informed parents often find themselves turning to high school counselors for advice on college options, information about loans and scholarships and help with the college application process. For young people whose parents have themselves not had the benefit of higher education, talking with an attentive, well-informed school counselor is even more essential.” The Report continues, “Recent studies of the guidance system as it operates indicate that counselors are often overworked and underprepared when it comes to helping students make the best decisions about their lives after high school.” The report’s press release concluded, “With college costs rising and completion rates sinking in the United States, this raises serious questions about what kind of help young people need, and whether they are getting it.”

These are difficult words for school counselors of high school students to read. The ASCA (American School Counselors Association) responded, “A recently released study by *Public Agenda* illustrates what can go wrong when there are not enough school counselors to support students and when school counselors are placed in positions preventing them from performing the functions they were trained and hired to do.” (ASCA, 2010).

I affirm this ASCA statement yet feel compelled to ask: what happens if our profession's counselor-to-student ratio does not improve, or if we keep being put in positions and duties that prevent us from performing the functions that we were trained and hired to do? What then? Don't try to improve? The solution is to work smarter and more effectively with both students and their parents, considering the existing limitations. The College Preparation Knowledge questionnaire has been designed for such a purpose.

Now, more than ever, new approaches and ideas are acutely needed in order to actively engage students, parents, and school counselors in the process of college planning and preparation. I note that if it was appropriate to survey former high school students about college planning topics several years later, after they had left high school and moved beyond the traditional college years, how much better would it be for present high school students and their parents to be surveyed while the student is still in high school, to assess their college planning and preparation knowledge and needs? But, the parents and student must participate in research like this or perhaps more fully accept the responsibilities consequences of their non-engagement down the road.

Assuming that surveying parents and students is a proper first step to determine the needs of these populations, as implied by the *Public Agenda* report, this study perhaps provides some helpful guidance on future studies utilizing the CPK questionnaire with the same population or similar high school populations. In addition, there may be anecdotal observations about college planning issues in general that could be offered from this study that might be valuable. I believe that this study could be conducted elsewhere with other high schools with the results communicated to the various school stakeholders in the high school community. Of particular importance is focusing on the topics that the parents, particularly the parents that did not have

any college experience, found to be difficult to understand. With this information, the Guidance Department needs to develop ways to effectively communicate this information to the parents.

The results from the study demonstrated that the area where the gap between importance and understanding was the largest concerned Financial Aid and Scholarships. There would also seem to be an interest in increasing awareness of the importance of SAT preparation activities, especially among the Student Non-College group. Finally, those items such as going for college visits that school counselors rated as quite important need to be communicated to students and parents. These goals and perhaps increased communication with parents at night and college-bound students in school could help create more engagement and awareness of college preparation and planning.

#### *Closing Comments*

It is important to appreciate those parents and students who did take the time to complete the College Preparation Knowledge questionnaire. Although the glass is certainly half-empty, it is also half-full. Those who did engage seemed to benefit from the experience and there is evidence that the audience that participated now feels more connected to the school counseling staff. There is much good in what was done and it would be neglectful to not remember this.

As noted, the personal touch, phone calls made at night to parents, clearly was the most effective tool for encouraging participation and completion of the CPK questionnaire. Although time-consuming, it yielded the highest dividends in enlisting families' support. It is always important to keep in mind that the personal relationship with the student and the parent provides the basis for college preparation and planning work. There needs to be a greater focus on how

school counselors can nurture such relationship development within the current parameters and realities of their positions.

Something as simple as creating a flex schedule for the school counselors to work at night once a month to call parents at home to discuss their concerns about college issues would not require a major reconfiguration of the school counselor position or an influx of additional funds. It is not enough for a high school to have evening hours and wait for parents to show up. An active and assertive communication posture from the school counselor is hard for parents and students to dismiss and demean as unimportant and irrelevant; nice but not necessary.

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## APPENDIX A – PARENT CONSENT FORM



**TEMPLE UNIVERSITY**  
A Commonwealth University

**College of Education**

**Department of Psychological Studies  
in Education (PSE)**

Educational Psychology  
1301 W. Cecil B. Moore Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19122-6091  
(215) 204-8087  
Fax: (215) 204-6013

### COLLEGE PREPARATION KNOWLEDGE CONSENT FORM

Exploring Parents' and Their High School Students' Understanding and Perspectives  
about College Preparation Knowledge

Principal Investigator Professor Joseph DuCette Ph.D.  
Educational Psychology Department at Temple University. Ph. (215) 204-4998

Student Investigator Eric Bierker – School Counselor,  
Northeastern High School Guidance Department. Ph. (717) 266-3644 Ext 81641

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This year, both you and your college preparatory child(ren) Grades 9-12 are being asked to voluntarily participate in a questionnaire about what you think are the most important aspects of college preparation and how much you and your child think you know about the college preparation process. Participating in this questionnaire will allow the Northeastern High School Guidance Department to better understand what our parents and students need and want in terms of college preparatory assistance. This information will help us to plan our services accordingly. This questionnaire is being conducted with the approval of Northeastern School District's Board of School Directors. High school counselor Eric Bierker is completing this research as part of his Dissertation for a Ph.D. degree from Temple University in Educational Psychology.

If you and your child decide not to participate, doing so in no way negatively affects the services you and your child receive from the Guidance Department. Participating does allow us to get a better understanding of the issues involved in college preparation. The more parents/guardians and children participate, the more complete our impressions will be about our parents'/guardians' and students' views regarding issues about college preparation. The questionnaire results will not reveal you or your child's identity and will be reported only as "Parents/Guardians" and "Student" results as aggregated groups.

Information on how complete to the questionnaire will be emailed to you and your child after we receive the signed Parent Consent Form (attached). The questionnaire is designed to take 20 minutes. Biological parents not residing in the household may also take this questionnaire: We encourage you to share this letter with him/her. We request that parents/guardians and students not work together when completing the questionnaire. You and your child will complete the College Preparation Knowledge Questionnaire anonymously.

If you do not have internet access, please call Eric Bierker at 717-266-3644 Ext 81641 to make arrangements to take the questionnaire at the high school on a computer or you may request a paper copy of the questionnaire.

If you want further information regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Richard Throm, Program Manager and Coordinator at the Office of the Vice President for Research at Temple University by phoning (215) 707-8757. Any other questions or concerns should be directed to me, Eric Bierker, at (717) 266-3644 Ext 81641. I will return phone calls promptly. Please sign the attached parent permission form and have your child(ren) return the second sheet only to the high school Guidance Department office (10-12 building). You are to keep this first sheet for reference.

Thank-You,

Eric Bierker, and, Joseph DuCette, Ph.D.  
School Counselor, and, Temple University Professor  
717-266-3644 Ext 81641 [ebierker@temple.edu](mailto:ebierker@temple.edu)



TEMPLE UNIVERSITY  
A Commonwealth University

College of Education

Department of Psychological Studies  
in Education (PSE)

Educational Psychology  
1301 W. Cecil B. Moore Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19122-6091  
(215) 204-8087  
Fax: (215) 204-6013

**COLLEGE PREPARATION KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Exploring Parents' and Their High School Students' Understanding and Perspectives about  
College Preparation Knowledge

Principal Investigator Professor Joseph DuCette Ph.D.  
Educational Psychology Department at Temple University. Ph. (215) 204-4998

Student Investigator Eric Bierker School Counselor  
Northeastern High School Guidance Department. Ph. (717) 266-3644 Ext 81641

I \_\_\_\_\_ give my permission  
Parent/Guardian (please print your name)

for my child OR children to complete the questionnaire. Please print H.S. student(s) name(s):

NAMES:

---

_____	_____
Parent/Guardian Signature	Date
_____	_____
Student Signature	Date
_____	_____
Student Signature	Date
_____	_____
Student Signature	Date

The email address to where the access information for the questionnaire is to be sent:

---

(Please print legibly. If you do not have an email address, please leave blank)

PLEASE HAVE YOUR CHILD(REN) RETURN THIS PAGE, THE SIGNED PERMISSION FORM, TO ERIC BIERKER IN THE H.S. GUIDANCE OFFICE (10-12 BUILDING) BY TBA. YOU ARE TO KEEP THE FIRST PAGE FOR YOUR REFERENCE. IF MORE CONVENIENT, YOU MAY FAX THIS FORM TO 266-0616 ATTN: ERIC BIERKER OR SEND IT IN THE MAIL TO NORTHEASTERN HIGH SCHOOL, 300 HIGH STREET, MANCHESTER, PA. 17345, ATTN: ERIC BIERKER. SOON AFTER RETURNING THIS FORM, YOU WILL RECEIVE AN EMAIL CONTAINING THE LINKS TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE. THANK-YOU!

**APPENDIX B – COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE PREPARATION QUESTIONNAIRE  
(PARENT/STUDENT/COUNSELOR)**

**COLLEGE PREPARATION KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Exploring Parents’ and Their High School Students’ Understanding and  
Perspectives about College Knowledge**

DEVELOPED BY ERIC BIERKER

College Preparation Knowledge questionnaire © Eric Bierker

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**Parent/Student (Questions 1-6 are different for parents and students, otherwise questions are the same,  
Counselor demographic items 1-6 not included AND Counselors only answered Importance Items Q7 – Q81 )**

Your participation is entirely voluntary and your identity is to be confidential when the results become public. The entire questionnaire is designed to take 20 minutes to complete. If you have more than one college-bound child in the high school, please take the questionnaire only once.

1. Your ethnicity:

- White
- Black
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian
- Other, please specify

2. The grade level of your oldest child in high school:

- 9<sup>th</sup>
- 10<sup>th</sup>
- 11<sup>th</sup>
- 12<sup>th</sup>

3. Your Parent/Guardian Status:

- Biological Father
- Biological Mother
- Step-Father
- Step-Mother
- Brother/Sister
- Girlfriend/Boyfriend of Biological Mother/Father
- Grandparent
- Aunt/Uncle
- Court Appointed or 1302 Guardian
- Other, please specify

4. Your level of education:

- Some high school or below
- High school diploma or GED
- Some post-high school business, art, or trade school (less than two years)
- Some college
- Associate's degree/two year degree
- Bachelor's degree/four year degree
- Some graduate or professional school
- Graduate or professional degree

5. How many children/step-children do have in high school:

- 1
- 2
- 3

- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 or more

6. How much education are you expecting your child to receive:

- Some high school or below
- High school diploma or GED
- Some post-high school business, art, or trade school (less than two years)
- Some college
- Associate's degree/two year degree
- Bachelor's degree/four year degree
- Some graduate or professional school
- Graduate or professional degree

**STUDENT QUESTIONS (These are first six questions of the student questionnaire)**

1. Your ethnicity:

- White
- Black
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian
- Other

2. Who do you live with: (select all that apply)

- Biological Father
- Biological Mother
- Step-Father
- Step-Mother
- Brother/Sister
- Girlfriend/Boyfriend
- Grandparent
- Aunt/Uncle
- Court Appointed
- Other, please specify

3. If you have an older brother or sister, what is the highest educational level of your oldest sibling:

- Some high school
- High school diploma
- Some post-high school
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Some graduate or
- Graduate or professional degree
- No older brother or sister
- Not applicable

4. Number of brothers/sisters (include step) in household:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 or more

5. My grade:

- 9th grader
- 10th grader
- 11th grader
- 12th grader

6. How much education are you expecting to receive:

- Some high school
- High school diploma
- Some post-high school

Some college  
Associate's degree  
Bachelor's degree  
Some graduate or professional degree

Please rate the following questions in terms of how important you think the items are as a parent or guardian of a college-bound child to know. A Comments section follows each set of items. You can add items that you think should have been included, make suggestions for improvements, etc.

### Helping Students Prepare for College

7. Knowing what college preparatory classes to take in high school

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

8. Understanding high school class weighting, class rank, and calculating GPA issues

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

9. The difference between high school graduation requirements and college admission requirements

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

10. Knowing a timeline of when to do what in Grades 9-12 regarding college planning steps

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

11. Helping students develop time management, organizational, test-taking, note-taking, and study-skills

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

12. Understanding the differences among highly-selective, selective, and non-selective colleges

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

13. Being informed about Advanced Placement courses

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

14. The importance of extra-curricular activities

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

15. Any additional thoughts about helping prepare students for college?

### Helping Students Research Colleges

16. Going to colleges for visits

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

17. Attending visits by college admissions representatives at high school

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

18. Knowing the types of degrees colleges offer (Associate, B.A./B.S., Masters, Ph. D.)

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

19. Going to college fairs

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

20. Knowing what majors are offered at what colleges

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

21. How to find a good fit to a college

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

22. Understanding the academic demands of college

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

23. Understanding the social life of college

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

24. The factors considered in college admissions (grades/coursework, standardized test scores, role of extra-curriculars, etc)

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

25. How to have a successful college interview  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

26. Any additional thoughts on helping students research colleges?

**Helping Students Understand the College Application Process**

27. Knowing how many and the types of colleges to apply to  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

28. How much time should be given to high school guidance departments to complete the various tasks related to the college application process  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

29. When students should apply to college  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

30. How to request a high school transcript  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

31. How applications can differ in length, complexity, and other aspects  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

32. Process for filing electronically versus filing the paper application  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

33. Knowing about The Common Application  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

34. Understanding what is on a high school transcript  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

35. Early Decision issues

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

36. Importance of recommendations by school counselors

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

37. Importance of recommendations by teachers

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

38. What are the students and parent/guardian rights in reviewing a recommendation

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

39. Writing the application essay

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

40. Any additional thoughts on helping students understand the college application process?

#### **Helping Students Understand Standardized Testing**

41. When to take the PSAT

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

42. Why to take the PSAT

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

43. How to sign up for PSAT

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

44. When to take the SAT/ACT

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

Total

45. Why to take the SAT/ACT

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

46. What is tested on the SAT/ACT  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

47. How to register for SAT/ACT  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

48. How many times the SAT/ACT should be taken  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

49. Understanding how the SAT/ACT is scored  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

50. Purpose of the SAT II  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

51. When students should take SAT II's  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

52. How to apply for non-standard administration (IEP students)  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

53. How much the SAT/ACT costs  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

54. How to qualify for and receive a fee waiver to SAT/ACT, PSAT, and AP exams  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important

Not Important  
Total

55. How colleges utilize SAT/ACT scores  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

56. The effectiveness of SAT/ACT prep programs  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

57. Any additional thoughts on helping students understand standardized testing?

### **Helping Students Understand Costs of College, Financial Aid, and Scholarships**

58. The cost of attending college (tuition, room and board, books, etc.)  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

59. How the Expected Family Contribution (EPC) is determined  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

60. How to complete the FAFSA Financial Aid Form  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

61. What the FAFSA looks at income and asset-wise  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

62. When the FAFSA should be filed  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

63. What the CSS/Financial Aid Profile is and when and why it should be filed  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

64. How an independent student status is determined  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important

Not Important  
Total

65. Types of financial aid (grants, loans, scholarships, work/study)  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

66. How to appeal a financial aid award  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

67. Repayment issues on school loans  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

68. How to find and apply for scholarships  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

69. How to avoid scholarship scams  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

70. Any additional thoughts on helping students understand costs of college (financial aid and scholarships)

### **Helping Students Understand Career Development**

71. Helping students decide what to major in when they go to college  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

72. Understanding one's abilities in making career development choices  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

73. Importance of interests when deciding what to major in while in college  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

74. Researching job trends in the world of employment  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important

Total

75. How values impact career selection

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

76. Finding good career assessment tools

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

77. How to find employment

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

78. Developing job-related skills such as interviewing and resume writing

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

79. How to select references for employment

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

80. Utilizing guidance services and resources for career development

Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important  
Total

81. Any additional thoughts on helping students understand career development?

Now, please rate the following questions in terms of how much you think you know about the items as compared to other parents of college-bound students. A Comments section follows each set of items. You can add items that you think should have been included or make suggestions for improvements

### **Helping Students Prepare for College**

82. Knowing what college preparatory classes to take in high school

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

83. Understanding high school class weighting, class rank, and calculating GPA issues

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

84. The difference between high school graduation requirements and college admission requirements

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

85. Knowing a timeline of when to do what in Grades 9-12 regarding college planning steps

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

86. Helping students develop time management, organizational, test-taking, note-taking, and study-skills

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

87. Understanding the differences among highly-selective, selective, and non-selective colleges

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

88. Being informed about Advanced Placement courses

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

89. The importance of extra-curricular activities

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

90. Any additional thoughts about helping prepare students for college?

### **Helping Students Research Colleges**

91. Going to colleges for visits

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

92. Attending visits by college admissions representatives at high school

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

93. Knowing the types of degrees colleges offer (Associate, B.A./B.S., Masters, Ph. D.)

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

94. Going to college fairs

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

95. Knowing what majors are offered at what colleges

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

96. How to find a good fit to a college

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

97. Understanding the academic demands of college

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

98. Understanding the social life of college

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

99. The factors considered in college admissions (grades/coursework, standardized test scores, role of extra-curriculars, etc)

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

100. How to have a successful college interview

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

101. Any additional thoughts on helping students research colleges?

**Helping Students Understand the College Application Process**

102. Knowing how many and the types of colleges to apply to

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

103. How much time should be given to high school guidance departments to complete the various tasks related to the college application process

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

104. When students should apply to college

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

105. How to request a high school transcript

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

106. How applications can differ in length, complexity, and other aspects

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

107. Process for filing electronically versus filing the paper application

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

108. Knowing about The Common Application

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

109. Understanding what is on a high school transcript

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

110. Early Decision issues

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

111. Importance of recommendations by school counselors

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

112. Importance of recommendations by teachers

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

113. What are the students and parent/guardian rights in reviewing a recommendation

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

114. Writing the application essay

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

115. Any additional thoughts on helping students understand the college application process?

**Helping Students Understand Standardized Testing**

116. When to take the PSAT

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

117. Why to take the PSAT

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

118. How to sign up for PSAT

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

119. When to take the SAT/ACT

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

120. Why to take the SAT/ACT

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

121. What is tested on the SAT/ACT

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

122. How to register for SAT/ACT

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

123. How many times the SAT/ACT should be taken

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

124. Understanding how the SAT/ACT is scored

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

125. Purpose of the SAT II

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

126. When students should take SAT II?:

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

127. How to apply for non-standard administration (IEP students)

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

128. How much the SAT/ACT costs

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

129. How to qualify for and receive a fee waiver to SAT/ACT, PSAT, and AP exams

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

130. How colleges utilize SAT/ACT scores

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

131. The effectiveness of SAT/ACT prep programs

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

132. Any additional thoughts on helping students understand standardized testing?

**Helping Students Understand Costs of College, Financial Aid, and Scholarships**

133. The cost of attending college (tuition, room and board, books, etc.)

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

134. How the Expected Family Contribution (EPC) is determined

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

135. How to complete the FAFSA Financial Aid form

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

136. What the FAFSA looks at income and asset-wise

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

137. When the FAFSA should be filed

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

138. What the CSS/Financial Aid Profile is and when and why it should be filed

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

139. How an independent student status is determined

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

140. Types of financial aid (grants, loans, scholarships, work/study

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

141. How to appeal a financial aid award

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

142. Repayment issues on school loans

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

143. How to find and apply for scholarships

Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less

Know Much Less  
Total

144. How to avoid scholarship scams  
Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

145. Any additional thoughts on helping students understand costs of college (financial aid and scholarships)

#### **Helping Students Understand Career Development**

146. Helping students decide what to major in when they go to college  
Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

147. Understanding one's abilities in making career development choices  
Know Much More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

148. Importance of interests when deciding what to major in while in college  
Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

149. Researching job trends in the world of employment  
Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

150. How values impact career selection  
Know More  
How About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

151. Finding good career assessment tools  
Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

152. How to find employment  
Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less  
Total

153. Developing job-related skills such as interviewing and resume writing  
Know More  
Know About the Same  
Know Less  
Know Much Less

Total

154. How to select references for employment

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

155. Utilizing guidance services and resources for career development

Know More

Know About the Same

Know Less

Know Much Less

Total

156. Any additional thoughts on helping students understand career development?

157. Do you have any additional thoughts about any aspect of college preparation that has not been addressed in this questionnaire?

## APPENDIX C – Ind & Group Means, Standard Deviation for the Sample for the CPKQ

Ques #	Par Coll. n	Mean	Par Non-Coll. n	Mean	Stud Par Coll. n	Mean	Stud Par Non-Coll. n	Mean	Sch. Coun n	Mean	Group Mean	Group Std Dev.
7	28	3.93	52	3.75	24	3.42	29	3.45	29	3.83	3.69	.538
8	28	3.43	52	3.56	24	3.25	29	3.10	29	3.07	3.32	.684
9	28	3.71	52	3.63	24	3.54	29	3.45	29	3.45	3.57	.556
10	28	3.86	51	3.69	24	3.50	29	3.59	29	3.69	3.67	.522
11	28	3.86	52	3.73	24	3.38	29	3.55	29	3.47	3.65	.527
12	28	3.04	52	3.13	24	2.79	29	3.17	29	2.78	3.06	.733
13	28	3.36	51	3.37	24	3.25	29	3.14	29	2.87	3.26	.703
14	28	3.11	52	2.96	24	2.96	29	3.24	29	2.90	3.07	.831
16	28	3.71	52	3.58	24	3.58	29	3.45	29	3.23	3.65	.541
17	28	3.18	52	3.31	24	3.00	29	3.28	29	3.03	3.19	.698
18	28	3.46	51	3.49	24	3.33	29	3.52	29	3.24	3.42	.639
19	28	2.89	52	3.13	24	2.92	28	2.79	29	2.85	2.95	.719
20	28	3.71	52	3.62	24	3.67	29	3.86	29	3.59	3.68	.507
21	28	3.54	52	3.65	24	3.50	29	3.62	29	3.62	3.63	.533
22	28	3.64	50	3.76	24	3.71	28	3.71	29	3.83	3.74	.470
23	27	3.00	51	3.16	24	2.50	29	3.10	29	2.90	2.98	.718
24	28	3.64	51	3.69	24	3.54	29	3.69	29	3.69	3.66	.501
25	28	3.54	52	3.65	24	3.58	29	3.86	29	3.03	3.55	.621
27	27	3.50	51	3.55	24	3.25	29	3.52	29	3.17	3.42	.619
28	28	3.46	52	3.56	24	3.13	29	3.10	29	3.32	3.35	.627
29	28	3.75	51	3.76	24	3.67	29	3.62	29	3.45	3.66	.547
30	28	3.46	52	3.29	24	3.50	29	3.41	29	3.17	3.35	.645
31	28	3.04	51	3.14	24	2.79	29	3.07	29	2.93	3.02	.675
32	28	3.14	51	3.10	24	2.46	29	3.10	29	2.69	2.94	.730
33	28	3.14	51	3.25	24	3.00	29	3.28	29	2.83	3.14	.711
34	28	3.29	51	3.27	24	3.46	29	3.41	29	3.34	3.34	.681
35	28	3.18	50	3.16	24	2.87	29	3.28	29	2.79	3.08	.723
36	28	3.18	51	3.43	24	3.08	29	3.17	29	3.00	3.21	.636
37	28	3.32	51	3.39	24	3.25	29	3.17	29	3.21	3.29	.684
38	28	3.29	51	3.45	24	3.25	29	3.28	29	2.76	3.24	.685
39	28	3.68	50	3.56	24	3.50	29	3.66	29	3.38	3.56	.612
41	28	3.61	51	3.59	24	3.17	29	3.41	29	3.38	3.46	.632
42	28	3.54	50	3.50	24	3.08	29	3.52	29	3.32	.639	.051
43	28	3.50	51	3.49	24	2.92	29	3.21	29	3.79	3.30	.650
44	28	3.79	51	3.69	24	3.33	29	3.62	29	3.79	3.66	.514
45	28	3.68	51	3.63	24	3.21	29	3.62	29	3.62	3.57	.544
46	28	3.68	51	3.71	24	3.42	29	3.86	29	3.62	3.67	.510
47	27	3.63	51	3.59	24	3.08	29	3.48	29	3.48	3.48	.572
48	28	3.43	50	3.64	24	3.08	29	3.59	29	3.21	3.43	.641
49	28	3.50	50	3.66	24	3.29	29	3.69	29	3.28	3.51	.604
50	27	3.37	50	3.50	24	2.92	29	3.45	29	2.68	3.23	.715
51	27	3.44	51	3.53	24	2.96	29	3.45	29	2.82	3.29	.741
52	28	2.50	51	3.10	24	2.42	29	2.76	29	3.17	2.89	.965
53	27	2.67	51	3.00	24	2.58	29	3.03	29	2.76	2.84	.880
54	28	2.79	51	3.02	24	2.75	29	3.17	29	2.93	2.95	.927
55	28	3.57	50	3.58	24	3.42	29	3.62	29	3.45	3.54	.548
56	28	3.39	51	3.51	24	3.21	29	3.45	29	3.03	3.35	.664
58	28	3.86	51	3.80	24	3.54	29	3.76	29	3.76	3.73	.497
59	28	3.64	51	3.65	24	3.17	29	3.38	29	3.41	3.48	.613
60	28	3.71	51	3.57	24	3.21	29	3.48	29	3.72	3.55	.641
61	28	3.61	52	3.58	24	3.21	29	3.31	29	3.17	3.41	.646
62	28	3.75	52	3.63	24	3.21	29	3.28	29	3.66	3.53	.592
63	28	3.64	52	3.63	24	3.25	29	3.38	29	3.38	3.41	.710
64	28	2.96	52	3.50	24	3.00	29	3.28	29	2.90	3.19	.750
65	27	3.70	52	3.83	24	3.67	29	3.79	29	3.69	3.75	.500

66	28	3.29	52	3.58	24	3.29	28	3.54	29	2.90	3.35	.770
67	28	3.43	52	3.62	24	3.25	29	3.52	29	3.07	3.41	.684
68	27	3.89	52	3.87	24	3.79	29	3.93	29	3.93	3.84	.380
69	28	3.71	52	3.83	24	3.71	29	3.90	29	3.55	3.75	.499
70	28	3.68	51	3.61	24	3.50	29	3.76	29	3.52	3.61	.571
72	28	3.75	52	3.62	24	3.46	29	3.72	29	3.62	3.64	.508
73	28	3.79	52	3.62	24	3.54	29	3.79	29	3.48	3.64	.575
74	28	3.36	52	3.52	24	3.58	28	3.36	29	3.36	3.45	.610
75	28	3.50	52	3.42	24	3.21	29	3.34	29	3.21	3.35	.673
76	27	3.44	52	3.48	24	3.25	29	3.28	29	3.24	3.36	.657
77	27	3.56	52	3.83	24	3.46	29	3.72	29	2.93	3.55	.642
78	28	3.61	52	3.67	24	3.42	29	3.62	29	3.31	3.55	.631
79	28	3.36	52	3.42	24	3.25	29	3.48	29	3.48	3.32	.676
80	28	3.50	52	3.48	24	3.04	29	3.34	29	3.45	3.39	.633
82	28	3.07	52	2.62	24	3.08	29	2.90	29	N/A	N/A	N/A
83	28	3.04	52	2.62	24	3.04	29	2.83	29	N/A	N/A	N/A
84	28	2.86	51	2.65	24	2.88	29	2.83	29	N/A	N/A	N/A
85	28	2.93	52	2.62	24	3.08	29	2.83	29	N/A	N/A	N/A
86	28	3.39	51	2.98	24	3.17	29	3.10	29	N/A	N/A	N/A
87	27	2.48	51	2.41	24	2.83	29	2.55	29	N/A	N/A	N/A
88	28	2.82	51	2.43	24	3.17	29	2.86	29	N/A	N/A	N/A
89	28	3.04	52	2.94	24	3.04	29	3.24	29	N/A	N/A	N/A
91	28	3.07	52	2.73	24	2.79	29	2.72	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
92	28	2.75	51	2.59	24	2.75	28	2.75	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
93	28	3.25	52	2.85	24	2.92	29	2.72	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
94	28	2.86	52	2.63	24	2.83	29	2.52	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
95	28	2.79	52	2.58	24	2.88	29	2.48	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
96	28	2.96	51	2.67	24	2.83	29	2.66	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
97	28	3.32	52	2.81	23	3.09	29	2.76	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
98	28	3.11	51	2.82	24	2.67	29	2.57	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
99	27	2.96	51	2.59	24	2.92	29	2.86	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
100	28	2.86	52	2.48	24	2.58	29	2.41	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
102	28	2.75	51	2.47	24	2.75	29	2.48	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
103	28	2.68	51	2.59	23	2.70	29	2.52	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
104	28	2.86	50	2.52	24	3.00	29	2.48	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
105	28	3.00	51	2.65	24	2.67	29	2.38	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
106	28	2.75	50	2.56	24	2.63	29	2.62	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
107	27	2.67	50	2.48	24	2.58	29	2.41	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
108	28	2.43	50	2.22	24	2.42	29	2.34	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
109	28	3.07	49	2.55	24	2.71	29	2.52	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
110	28	2.82	50	2.36	24	2.71	28	2.61	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
111	28	2.89	50	2.68	24	2.79	29	2.72	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
112	28	3.00	50	2.76	24	3.00	29	2.90	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
113	28	2.43	50	2.46	24	2.67	29	2.55	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
114	28	2.71	50	2.36	24	2.58	29	2.48	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
116	28	2.89	51	2.73	24	3.08	29	2.79	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
117	27	2.96	51	2.80	24	3.08	29	2.93	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
118	28	2.89	50	2.76	24	3.04	29	2.83	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
119	28	2.96	51	2.63	24	2.88	28	2.64	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
120	28	3.00	51	2.71	24	2.96	29	2.93	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
121	28	2.93	50	2.50	24	2.96	29	2.79	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
122	27	2.78	51	2.55	24	2.79	29	2.69	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
123	28	2.68	51	2.45	24	2.83	29	2.79	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
124	28	2.68	51	2.35	24	2.79	29	2.66	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
125	27	2.30	51	2.20	24	2.42	29	2.28	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
126	28	2.21	50	2.20	24	2.37	29	2.24	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
127	28	2.04	50	2.12	24	2.33	29	2.07	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
128	28	2.68	51	2.43	23	2.79	29	2.55	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
129	28	2.21	50	2.18	24	2.37	29	2.31	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
130	28	2.68	51	2.37	24	2.79	29	2.59	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
131	28	2.71	51	2.31	24	2.79	29	2.62	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
133	27	3.15	51	2.76	24	3.13	29	2.76	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
134	28	2.46	50	2.38	24	2.42	29	2.52	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
135	28	2.71	51	2.37	24	2.17	29	2.24	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
136	28	2.57	52	2.37	24	2.08	29	2.24	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

137	28	2.61	52	2.38	24	2.17	29	2.21	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
138	28	2.21	51	2.14	24	2.29	29	2.10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
139	28	2.07	51	2.18	24	2.42	29	2.28	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
140	28	2.75	52	2.42	24	2.79	29	2.62	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
141	28	2.25	52	2.15	24	2.50	29	2.24	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
142	28	2.64	51	2.39	24	2.71	29	2.41	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
143	28	2.54	50	2.30	24	2.71	28	2.32	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
144	28	2.43	51	2.25	24	2.46	29	2.14	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
146	28	3.21	50	2.68	24	3.00	29	2.76	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
147	27	3.30	49	2.76	24	3.04	29	2.69	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
148	28	3.29	49	2.84	24	3.08	28	2.89	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
149	28	3.07	50	2.68	24	2.79	29	2.62	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
150	28	3.21	50	2.82	24	2.92	29	2.79	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
151	28	2.86	50	2.62	24	2.92	29	2.76	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
152	28	3.36	50	2.92	24	2.88	29	2.86	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
153	28	3.29	48	2.81	24	2.75	28	2.89	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
154	28	3.25	50	2.98	24	2.79	28	2.64	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
155	28	2.82	47	2.66	24	2.83	28	2.64	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Appendix D: Importance: Significance ANOVA (All 5 Groups)**

Question #	F	Sig.
7	5.603	.000***
8	3.753	.006**
11	3.478	.009**
16	4.089	.004**
<b>23</b>	<b>4.65</b>	<b>.004**</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>8.565</b>	<b>.000***</b>
27	2.559	.041*
28	3.822	.005**
<b>32</b>	<b>5.520</b>	<b>.000***</b>
35	2.532	.043*
36	2.724	.031*
38	5.373	.000***
41	2.435	.050*
<b>42</b>	<b>2.512</b>	<b>.044*</b>
43	4.653	.001***
44	3.633	.007**
<b>45</b>	<b>3.384</b>	<b>.011*</b>
<b>46</b>	<b>2.762</b>	<b>.030*</b>
<b>47</b>	<b>4.110</b>	<b>.003**</b>
<b>48</b>	<b>4.837</b>	<b>.001***</b>
<b>49</b>	<b>3.495</b>	<b>.009**</b>
<b>50</b>	<b>9.831</b>	<b>.000***</b>
<b>51</b>	<b>6.842</b>	<b>.000***</b>
<b>52</b>	<b>4.145</b>	<b>.003**</b>
56	2.977	.021*
59	3.486	.009**
60	2.921	.023*
61	3.460	.010**
62	5.328	.000**
63	6.442	.000**
<b>64</b>	<b>4.878</b>	<b>.001***</b>
66	4.496	.002**
67	3.722	.006**
<b>77</b>	<b>12.689</b>	<b>.000***</b>
79	2.459	.048*
80	2.482	.046*

\* significant at .05 level \*\* significant at .01 level \*\*\* significant at .001 level  
 (Data in **bold** identified as significantly different in parent and student t-test)

## **APPENDIX E - Open-Ended Questions: Parent and Student Responses**

### **Q 15 Importance-Any additional thoughts about helping prepare students for college?**

#### **Parent: College Graduate**

# 1 The only way to properly insure your child gets all the help he/she needs in preparing for college has to include parents and guidance counselors. Deadlines are important to meet. I have found the biggest help has come from the school guidance counselor.

# 2 The high school should be better with getting general info out to parents on how to prepare your child for college and what does the parent have to do. When I asked, the school was always very helpful and responded quickly, but a parent of a new high school child doesn't always know what to ask.

#3 More one on one between students and teachers during schedule making- done very early- students aren't thinking about what they need 3- 4 years from now for college and parents are too far removed from college planning as far as what high school classes or path to take.

#4 I feel only a limited amount of these issues are addressed at Northeastern.

#5 Child must be well-rounded and motivated.

#6 I would like to see class time devoted to teaching kids how to take SATs.

#7 You need whatever help you can get know because it is a jungle out there and the strong with survive - survive of the fittest and my daughter WILL BE one of them.

#8 Make meetings available more frequently. In the past, one meeting place and time was not convenient for our family. If you were unable to make a planning meeting, the opportunity to get the information was slim.

#9 Question 6 above: I think 'graduate' level education and professional degree may be very important, however at this time we do not know what our daughter wants to pursue. She might become a writer, lawyer, engineer, scientist, minister, or musician.

#10 Helping them negotiate successfully some classes that they just have interest in that they can take without fear of confusing a college entrance reviewer.

#11 Knowing important dates for application deadlines required for college.

#### **Parent: Non-College Graduate**

#1 Test taking strategies. (SAT, PSAT)

#2 The school should have a preparation class for the SAT's and/or the ACT's.

**Student: Parent College Graduate**

#1 Knowing what your interests and personality are.

#2 We should be informed of what needs to happen in the end of eighth grade so we can plan our high school careers accordingly and not end up taking the wrong classes.

**Student: Parent Non-College Graduate**

# 1 Test taking strategies. (SAT, PSAT).

#2 The school should have a preparation class for the SAT's and/or the ACT's.

**Q26 Importance - Any additional thoughts on helping students research colleges?**

**Parent: College Graduate**

#1 become involved with your guidance counselor and follow his/her advice on preparing for college.

#2 The student needs to know when to start doing all of these things. I left some opportunities go because I didn't understand the importance if them until I talked to other parents who had been thru this before.

#3 Where to start.

#4 If feel a good majority of these items are addressed at Northeastern but there still needs to be some individual guidance offered.

#5 After going through this with older son, college visits and talking to professors at school are most important. You must find a college too that has what you want to study.

#6 I would like to see classroom time devoted to helping students understand the importance and mechanics of writing a good personal statement for college admission.

#7 Researching the right college is key. College is too expensive to just randomly pick. Need a good mix of academic and social life.

#8 We have not been to a college fair yet to know how much/little benefit it is. I'm not sure I understand question 28 below... are you asking if the guidance office should do our applications for us? No Are you asking if h.s. guidance depts. should spend more time helping us understand

the process, then yes, that is very important. For us, having a first time college bound student we are gathering most of our information from other parents whose children have been to college. And we are mindful of the mistakes they have shared through their experiences.

#9 Visiting colleges worked best for us.

**Parent: Non-College Graduate**

#1 I was unable to attend the last college workshop hosted by Northeastern; I would like to see another workshop and literature as I am at a loss on how to get started.

#2 Literature from specific schools can help greatly. In addition, help from the school counselors with pro's and cons of each college is helpful as well.

#3 Parents also need to be educated on what we have to do to help. Even need to know price options and any additional help for paying for college.

**Student: Parent College Graduate**

#1 Help them figure out what they want to study.

**Student: Parent Non-College Graduate**

# 1 Scholarships?

**Q 40 Importance-Any additional thoughts on helping students understand the college application process?**

**Parent: College Graduate**

# 1 Again the high school guidance counselor is a very important contact to make regarding all issues of preparing for all aspects of college.

# 2 I would think the guidance dept would be a HUGH help in this area and I have no doubt that NHS guidance dept will be there when I need them.

#3 Our family has personally not started any of these processes but I feel we definitely as a family could use some guidance in these areas.

#4 Just lots of paperwork and formalities that we are not used to doing.

#5 See previous comment.

#6 ENGLISH - Cannot stress it enough. Know your writing skills.

#7 I am unaware of most of the items you mention above. Does the guidance counselor actually have a say? I do not recall that when I went to college 30 years ago. I am already stressing that we have missed some Early Decision issues.

**Parent: Non-College Graduate**

#1 I wish high schools would offer in 10, 11 or 12 grade a required period or course for students to attend to learn some of this info - repeat until heard type brain washing. :) It can take weeks/months of reading online and prep work to know if you are even near doing the right steps. I've had to use parents of older children who've gone thru this process to learn more every day needs.

#2 Some of these I marked as important because I don't know what they are. Ex- common application, early decision issues.

**Student: Parent College Graduate**

# 1 I don't know how to apply to a college or what an application essay is. I also don't know how to do a college interview.

**Student: Parent Non-College Graduate**

No responses.

**Q 57 Importance - Any additional thoughts on helping students understand standardized testing?**

**Parent: College Graduate**

#1 Parents need to be very instrumental in finding the proper resources for the child to get prepared for any testing.

#2 It took me two hours on the computer to sign my son up for the SAT's. This was frustrating and I wish someone would have warned me. The SAT process is just the beginning of the college process. It is very important to know how and why it works. I have never heard of the ACT test? I feel the high school could do a better job in getting the info out to parents. Again they were hugely helpful when I asked, but I don't always know what to ask and some I am fearful I will completely miss something important.

#3 Didn't know about fee waiver

#4 I feel a focus on how to prepare for the SAT is lacking. We have chose an outside course to take but don't know if there are any other options out there.

#5 Some colleges now give their own tests in addition to the SAT. Students should know this.

#6 see previous comment...The students need to have the same advantages available to them that other schools offer their students to be competitive.

#7 In this section, if I marked an item important rather than very important, then I probably did not know anything about it to be able to say that it is very important. So I deferred to 'important' out of ignorance.

#8 Have teaching staff prepare and work with the students who will be taking the SAT test.

**Parent: Non-College Graduate**

#1 Test taking strategies.

**Student: Parent College Graduate**

#1 There's a fee waiver??? I haven't heard of some of these standardized tests.

**Student: Parent Non-College Graduate**

#1 Test taking strategies.

**Q 81 Importance-Any additional thoughts on helping students understand career development?**

**Parent: College Graduate**

#1 Again I cannot stress the importance of the guidance counselor in all aspects of preparing for college and what happens after completion of college.

#2 I would think the high school could be helpful with picking a career, but I had no idea they could be helpful interviewing skills, finding employment etc.

#3 Despite career development programs in middle school it has been difficult so far for my 10th grader to figure out a career path- due to ignorance of what is actually out there

#4 Trying to narrow down a path to take can be very overwhelming for some students who have many different interests. Having some help with direction can relieve a lot of stress for the student

#5 It is a shame to see money spent on 4 yr degree that never gets used because they do not like major. Knowing your interests and having a chance to work in field should help

#6 It would be nice if everyone could work the job of their dreams, but we need to be realistic and help these kids find the right jobs for them. Capitalize on their strengths and put them to good use.

**Parent: Non-College Graduate**

#1 It is difficult for students at the high school level to decide on a career path.

#2 How can we find out if the career she chooses once she has completed her education that there will be a position for her.

**Student: Parent College Graduate**

# 1 I don't know what I want to do in college yet and I don't know how to do job/college interviews nor fill out resumes.

**Student: Parent Non-College**

No responses.

**Q90 Understanding-Any additional thoughts about helping prepare students for college?**

**Parent: College Graduate**

#1 I feel I'm behind the eight ball with my knowledge, however I'm talking friends that have already been thru this so of course they will know more than me. It is so different from when I went to college.

#2 Being a college grad myself (twice - 2 degrees), I feel I can help my daughter to choose wisely about college, but I never turn down information to help her get the BEST.

**Parent: Non-College Graduate**

# 1 From someone whose child is involved very highly in out of school activities that do not allow time for "School extra curricular" it is frustrating that the college/school does not seem to take that discipline and participation into account as much as a school related activity when it is as equal from my standpoint.

**Student: Parent College Graduate**

No responses.

**Student: Parent Non-College Graduate**

No responses.

**Q 101 Understanding-Any additional thoughts on helping students' research colleges?**

**Parent: College Graduate**

No responses.

**Parent: Non-College Graduate**

#1 We need all the help we can get.

**Student: Parent College Graduate**

No responses.

**Student: Parent Non-College Graduate**

No responses.

**Q 115 Understanding-Any additional thoughts on helping students understand the college application process?**

**Parent: College Graduate**

#1 Question 103 sums it up for me. I could be a total pest to the guidance dept. I don't want to do that to them.

#2 English major/Psych minor and BSN.

**Parent: Non-College Graduate**

No responses.

**Student: Parent College Graduate**

# 1 I don't know anything about applying to college or having an interview with one.

**Student: Parent Non-College Graduate**

No responses.

**Q132 Understanding-Any additional thoughts on helping students understand standardized testing?**

**Parent: College Graduate**

#1 Don't know what ACT test is?

#2 Not much of a test taker.

**Parent: Non-College Graduate**

No responses.

**Student: College Graduate**

No responses.

**Student: Parent Non-College Graduate**

No responses.

**Q 133 Understanding-Any additional thoughts on helping students understand costs of college (financial aid and scholarships)**

**Parent: College Graduate**

#1 I don't know anything about this area and these questions overwhelm me. I have a lot to learn!

#2 Concerned about how to go about financial concerns since there is a father and step mother who may or may not be involved in the process-- lack of communication.

#3 This is the area we need the most help in.

**Parent: Non-College Graduate**

No responses.

**Student: Parent College Graduate**

No responses.

**Student: Parent Non-College Graduate**

No responses.

**Q 156 Understanding-Any additional thoughts on helping students understand career development?**

**Parent: College Graduate**

#1 These kids need all the help they can get. The truth is today's kids are lazy. Mine is no exception. They need good guidance and a lot of push.

# 2 Students I feel that are college bound should be interviewed to see what their family expectations are for them. Some families don't feel that students need to concentrate on career development out of high school and the college they attend will handle the career development.

**Parent: Non-College Graduate**

No responses.

**Student: Parent College Graduate**

No responses.

**Student: Parent Non-College Graduate**

No responses.

**Q. 157 – Do you have any additional thoughts about any aspect of college preparation that has not been addressed in this questionnaire?**

**Parent: College Graduate**

# 1 My daughter is waiting for colleges to come to her because she is a swimmer and is basing all her choices on her athletic ability.

# 2 In reality, nothing but a students' self motivation and hard work will allow them to successfully complete college. That needs to be stressed to students!

# 3 Make sure they understand the importance of a good education.

#4 College preparation can be better fine-tuned if a student determines what their interest is early in the high school career and guidance counselors include teachers into the student's decision or path to help groom them to take advantage of the opportunities that they may not know about or might be beneficial for them to firm up their decision.

**Parent: Non-College Graduate**

# 1 It has been 20 yrs since I went to college and my parents did most of that for me. I truly need help in all aspects of helping my child for college prep.

**Student: Parent College Graduate**

#1 Could you make it a bit shorter please?

# 2 I most want to find out what I should major in.

#3 I do not feel like I know enough to be prepared for college and I really have no clue what all the tests/classes/etc. I need to have completed for college.

**Student: Parent Non-College Graduate**

No responses.

## APPENDIX F Parent Scholarship Scam: E-Mail

Hi Mr. Bierker,

My son XXXX recently received a letter from the "National Society of High School Scholars". It was for membership to this organization for his academic achievement. They are asking for a one-time fee of \$60.00 to join. Before I send this money, I just wanted to confirm that this was a legitimate organization. It's been many years since I was in high school and there was the "National Honor Society" back in the "day," that kids were inducted into. I am assuming that this is the same? With all the scams out there today, I am hesitant of sending money and I would appreciate any information.

Thank you very much,  
XXXX

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From: "ERIC BIERKER" <bierkere@nesd.k12.pa.us>  
To: XXXXXX  
Date: Tue, 13 Apr 2010 11:27:45 -0400  
Subject: Re: Question about NSHSS

Hi Ms. XXXX

We, as school counselors, do not recommend parents and students to join any such organization that charges a fee for membership. I have looked into what the benefits of membership of organizations such as this and found them to be lacking. While maybe not unethical, these organizations are suspect. The name similarities between "National Society of High School Scholars" and the "National Honor Society" are misleading and confusing.

National Honor Society is entirely different despite the similarity in name. National Honor Society is run through the school and students are eligible their junior and senior year on the basis of scholarship, service, leadership, and character. Membership is free monetarily.

The advisor has been XXX in the past year and I think he is still serving as the advisor. I will cc. this email to him so that he can give you more information.

Here is the website for the National Honor Society organization.  
<http://www.nhs.us/>

I am actually writing about scholarship scams in my Dissertation now and your email confirmed the problems that exist. XXX, my replacement, can help you with this and other matters if you should have further questions.

Thanks for checking!

Mr. Bierker

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Hi Ms. XXXX

Could I have your permission to put a copy of your email and my reply (with your name and email removed) in my Dissertation? It just shows why the work that I have done with my research is so important. I am really glad that you asked as I don't want you to lose \$ 60 with and getting nothing in return. Again, thanks for asking. I appreciate that you considered my thoughts before proceeding.

Mr. Bierker

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Hi Mr. Bierker,

Thank you so much for your quick reply to my email, I appreciate it very, very much. (XXXX) has also replied to my email). The membership and how they presented it was very convincing. In the last line of the letter they even said that there was a teacher, XXX, from Northeastern, who was recently honored with an Educator of Distinction award. I'm glad that I had second thoughts and emailed you. I think I will pass on this \$60 "award".

Thanks again and yes you may use my email in your Dissertation. (If you would like to see the actual letter, I can mail it to you. Just let me know)

Sincerely,

XXXX

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