

## PROGRAM:

*10th Grade Blue-Skying for College*

## OBJECTIVES:

Help high school students to begin writing their personal statements to apply for post-secondary education institutions. This workshop session will also help students:

- a) “Blue-sky” possible futures by thinking outside the box;
- b) Understand the importance of telling their stories and how significant events in their lives are vital to creating a convincing statement;
- b) Commit to refining their personal statements over the next two years of high school.

## LOCATION:

High school classroom that all tenth graders rotate into throughout the day (for example: Sophomore English). In one school it was a two-day event because it was offered during a class that half of the 10th graders took one day and the other half the next day.

## DESCRIPTION:

College Blue-Skying was the result of collaboration among CWU GEAR UP, Northwest Learning Achievement Project (NLA), and the Bridges Project. The Bridges Project selected several pairs of college mentors, who presented and led work sessions in a high school classroom. These workshop sessions introduced sophomores to the college application process.

The pair of mentors (male and female) were selected partially on the basis of their compelling stories or struggles to make it to college against the odds. Wherever possible, students who had attended high school in the district were selected to present at their alma maters. NLA provided each mentor a stipend for presenting, and Bridges provided the transportation. Together, NLA and Bridges trained the mentors for the presentation. The lesson plan for this training is provided as an attachment.

Mentors focused on introducing 10th graders to the college application’s “personal statement” and the items that should be included in that statement (for example: understanding the importance of being involved in the community or at school). Most high school students do not realize how important this is until their senior year, when applying for college.

College mentors began each Blue-Skying session with an educational icebreaker. Mentors then provided a PowerPoint presentation about themselves, based on their own personal statements submitted when they applied to college. They talked about their pasts, their current situations, and finally their career goals when they graduate from college. They discussed how they were paying for college and what student life on campus looks like.

Mentors then proceeded to teach students how to begin their own personal statements. Some schools made the personal statement part of the English class curriculum. This aspect was important, because the students were required to finish their essays. One classroom session does not provide enough time to complete the statements.

Student success was immediate. High school students connected with the mentors, because they were close in age and came from similar backgrounds. Sometimes the mentors were from the same communities as the students. This was empowering because the students realized how achievable college is. For example, a mentor helped a high school student realize that surviving leukemia was a huge hurdle that she overcame and should talk about it in her personal statement. The student was afraid that it would sound like a “pity party.” The mentor helped her state it as a challenge and explain how it made her grow as a person and as a student. This student is now at the University of Washington.

## IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE:

### PREPARATION ACTIVITIES:

- Choose a date between October and May, preferably on Fridays because college students normally do not have classes on those days or not as many.
- Recruit college mentors from Student Affairs, College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), BRIDGES, Admissions, and the TRIO program.
- Meet with college students to plan the activity and go over the lesson plan.
- The college representative coordinating College Blue-Skying must review the PowerPoint with each college mentor to make sure there is enough information and appropriate information. The PowerPoint should not be too wordy and college students must use it as a guide for their speech.
- Confirm with college students the time of presentations, where to check-in, what they will need to do the presentation (laptop, internet, PowerPoint accessibility, projector, etc), and how many students to expect in each class.
- Give college students instructions and a map to the school and contact information-- who to call in case of bad weather, they are lost, etc.
- Have high school students ready with paper, pencil, and nametags so students can write their statements.
- In order for this activity to have the highest impact, the presentation must be done in small groups, classroom size. Assembly style is not effective, because some one-on-one time is needed.
- High school teachers must provide some preparation, explaining what students should expect and what the mentors will require of them. Students need to be prepared to fully participate and cooperate. The activity requires student involvement.
- The classroom should be set up and ready to go. College students will have their PowerPoint on a USB device to easily open the presentation.

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:

- It is ideal for the school to require students to complete the statement as part of a regular class curriculum.

## COSTS OR COST CONSIDERATIONS:

Event costs depend on many factors. As mentioned earlier, a \$250 stipend was given to each college student and travel expenses were also covered. Lunch was not provided, but some schools had a staff member take the students out to lunch.

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## ATTACHMENTS:

Lesson Plan for Bridges College Mentor Training (down below)  
Lesson Plan for Blue-Skying Presentation (next page)

### Lesson Plan: GEAR UP 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Event: Blue-Skying A Possible Future (55 minutes)

**Introduction:** The purpose of this lesson plan is to help Bridges mentors work with GEAR 10<sup>th</sup> grade students to help them imagine and plan toward long-term dreams and goals.

**Purpose:** Students will imagine what their future might look like, so that they can start to plan how to get there. Students are encouraged to think about things they are passionate about and to plan careers that incorporate their interests.

#### Objectives of the Lesson:

1. Students will listen to CWU mentors talk about their own career paths to date – past, present and future.
2. Students will listen to the mentors' versions of their own "Lifetime Achievement Award" exercise.
3. Students will engage in brainstorming or "blue-skying" that will help them think "outside the box" and imagine their futures.
4. Students will understand more about the changing world in which they will work, and will have some experience imagining possible jobs that might not yet exist.

#### Materials required: What you will need:

- Classroom environment with desks and chairs.
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade booklets.
- Blank paper.

Time	ACTIONS
<b>10 minutes</b>	Mentors start with an icebreaker. Then mentors introduce themselves and describe what is going to happen in the next 55 minutes: <i>Mentors share their challenges; mentors describe themselves Past, Present and Future. Students will take 5-7 minutes to develop their own Lifetime Achievement Awards, which they will share in small groups (5 students). One student from each group will be invited to share their future plan. Two students will be interviewed on how they achieve their Lifetime Achievement Award. Mentors will summarize and close.</i>
<b>10 minutes</b>	Mentors describe what challenges they faced and barriers they overcame to enroll finally at CWU. They will present their Past, and their Present. Mentors share their Future and their imagined “Lifetime Achievement Awards”
<b>5-7 minutes</b>	Students are asked to look at pages (14-15) in their “The Future. Get Ready” booklets and will start to frame their own “Lifetime Achievement Awards.”
<b>15 minutes</b>	Students are convened in small groups (5) and share their future plans. One student from each group will volunteer to share what they’ve written to the whole group.
<b>10 minutes</b>	One mentor will invite two students who haven’t reported out to be interviewed. This is their 10 <sup>th</sup> High School Reunion, and the student paper wants to know how they’ve done since they left high school.
<b>3 minutes</b>	Mentors do a quick review of the main points, and encourage students to look through their 10 <sup>th</sup> grade booklets to help them do more imagining of possible futures.