OWNERSHIP OF LEARNING

LESSON 10-17 ▲ LEVERAGING STRENGTHS

**LEARNING GOALS/OUTCOMES**

* Identify common barriers for first generation students.
* Analyze personal barriers as a first generation student.
* Brainstorm strategies for removing barriers based on personal strengths.
* Examine what stands between them and going beyond a high school education.
* Identify how they will overcome barriers with leveraging their personal strengths.

**MATERIALS NEEDED**

* **Student Handouts:**
* Removing Barriers Worksheet
* **Internet Access** for viewing online video: YouTube “Who We Are: First Generation College Students Speak Out” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyJRiCWy7xo>
* **Chart paper and/or white board**

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

1. **Share with the students that you want to take a short poll about going to college.** Use the following questions to get the students to think about being a first-generation college-going student. Note: the assumption is that many of the students will be first-generation college-going students.
   * How many of you are planning to go extend your education beyond high school through a technical program, two-year program, the military or a four-year program?
   * How many of you have a sibling or close relative that is in or has already graduated from college?
   * How many of your parents went beyond high school and have some postsecondary education or a college degree?
2. **Thank the students for their information and ask them what they noticed**. Share with students that first-generation students (as a group) often have common attributes. Choose from the following list of attributes to lead a brief discussion on “who” is most likely to be a first-generation college-going student.

**From: Education Center for Educational Statistics and US Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid (2007)**

First-generation college-going students have the following common attributes:

* + 64% of first generation students are female
  + 54% are minority
  + 14% have a disability
  + 16% were not born in the United States
  + 38% have dependents
  + 30% are single parents
  + 74% are financially independent
  + 11% earn degrees within six years as compared to 55% of the general college population
  + Most importantly, first-generation students are four times more likely to drop out-of college

1. **Share with students that they are going to see a short video** (3.5 minutes) of first-generation college students speaking out to Congress about student aid. Hand out the worksheet and ask students to check-off the barriers students identified in the video as they watch the video.
2. **Show the video clip.** Give students time to check-off the barriers they identified and ask students to check-off the barriers they know about personally. This approach is intended to make it safe for students in groups to be able to talk about barriers they are experiencing without revealing too much or making it too personal.
3. **Lead a brief discussion of the barriers**. What do students notice? What are their opinions? Share with the students that while the barriers are a reality, student strengths are also a reality. Obviously, the students from the video (note that they are from around the country and all different races) had positive strengths or attributes that helped them remove the barriers. Also note that – all students (even non-first generation) have some barriers. Have each student think about what his/her unique barriers might be.
4. **Put students in small groups and ask them to identify the strengths they observed in the video** and/or think would be there for first generation students. Examples you might give are a strong work, persistence, and/or someone in their family that is encouraging them to go to college. Tell students that at the end of their discussion they will share strengths with the group and record these on their worksheet.
5. **To conclude, as students are comfortable, ask them to share some of their strategies**.

**STUDENT PRODUCTS**

* **Completed *Removing Barriers Worksheet***

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND OTHER INFORMATION**

* **FACILITATOR NOTES**

This lesson begins the overall focus on asset recognition and how students can address or remove their own barriers to higher education. The materials provide students with examples of how other first-generation students have dealt with barriers. The activities then extend the discussion to allow students to self-identify their strengths and what strategies they will use to meet their goals.

* **ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES**

There is never enough time for students to reflect on what they are learning, especially when advisories meet for short times or every other week. As an Enrichment Activity, give students time to reflect on and generate strategies that they can use to overcome barriers they may be experiencing personally. Lead a group reflection around the following questions:

* Do they know how to get information about the college admissions or financial aid process?
* Are they talking to their parents about what they want to study and why that career is best for them?
* Do they have a mentor that can help them talk to their parents (preferably someone from similar circumstances)?

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LESSON 10-17 STUDENT HANDOUT

REMOVING BARRIERS

1. As you watch the video, circle the barriers to college in the left-hand column that you heard the first-generation college-going students talk about.
2. After the video, add other barriers in the blank spaces that you may be experiencing or know about from others’ experiences.
3. Barriers are not the most important thing about being a first-generation student. Removing the barriers is! List the strengths that might counter-act the barrier.
4. Finally, list the strategies first-generation students can use to remove the barriers.

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| **Barriers** | **Strengths** | **Strategies** |
| Extra pressure from family – being the family “hero” |  |  |
| Lack of college financing |  |  |
| Needing to work to support family |  |  |
| Sense that you will be “better than the family” |  |  |
| Balancing home and school obligations |  |  |
| Lower academic preparation in high school |  |  |
| Marrying or having children early |  |  |
| Knowing how to navigate the admissions process |  |  |
| Knowing how to get financial aid |  |  |
| Finding networks or support from others like you that want to go to college |  |  |

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| **Barriers** | **Strengths** | **Strategies** |
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