Julia de Burgos High School

REALIZING
COLLEGE FOR ALL

A close look at one school's first year engaging in a process to create opportunities for all students to explore post-secondary pathways, navigate the college application process, and receive the support needed to matriculate into a well-matched college.

CARA

Coaching Case Study

Julia de Burgos High School*

Background

Julia de Burgos High School is a small school serving 415 students. It has a dedicated staff, many of whom have been working at the school for three or more years. The school has strong leadership, including two hands-on assistant principals and a number of teacher leaders. Administration and staff are good at working together in highly functioning teams to actively develop strong programs and to solve problems as they arise. School staff came to college access work highly motivated. Julia de Burgos HS's college readiness committee consists of:

> *lead teachers from each grade*

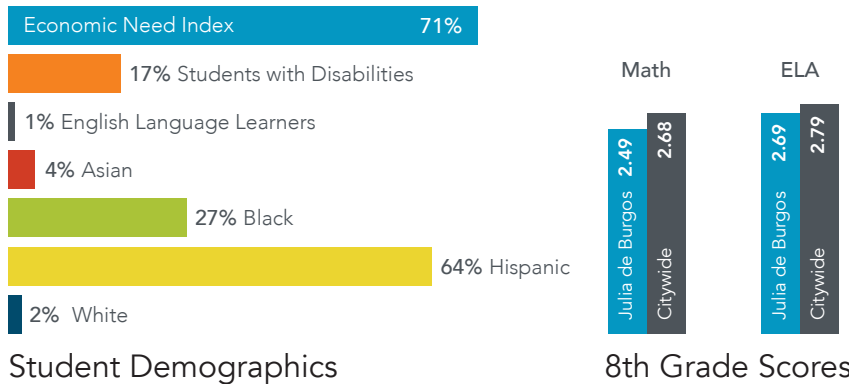> *two assistant principals*

> *college*

> *guidance counselor*

The school employs two guidance counselors, one of whom serves as a college counselor and 10th grade counselor. The college counselor is hard working and passionate, but lacks a wider network of counselor colleagues and on-going training to support her work. She carries a heavy student load with over 112 seniors.

The school had an existing highly-structured 4 year advisory program. It arranges its schedule to prioritize advisory by shortening classes a few minutes to add this 30 minute advisory mid-day, two days/week. The staff has sacrificed small advisory size to free one teacher per grade to lead advisory – responsibilities include: determining advisory content calendar, sharing resources, and loosely supervising their colleagues in advisory implementation.

*"How much of what they know is **real** information? How do we help them feel **comfortable** on campus? Is anybody really **prepared** until you're there?"*
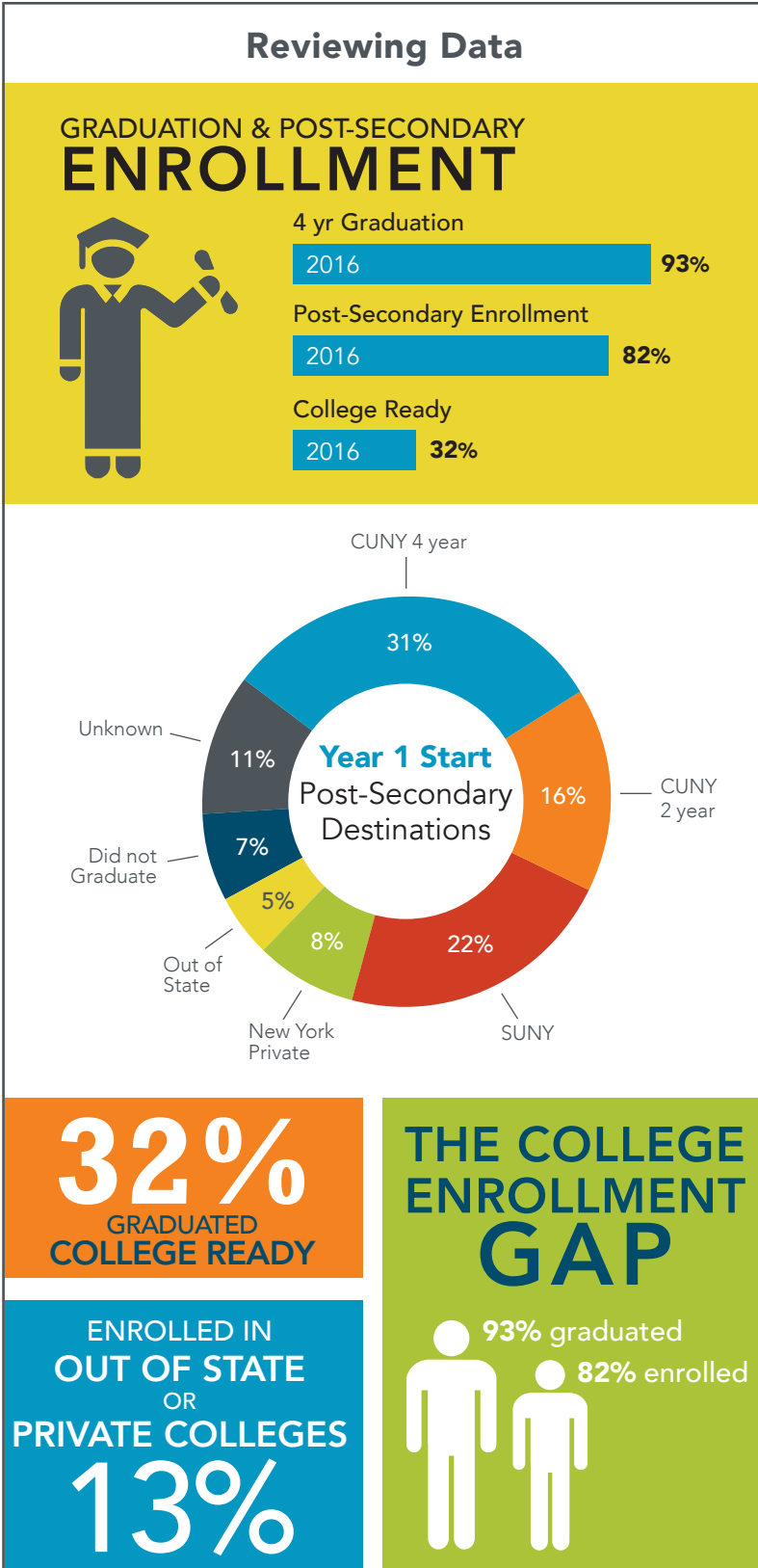
- Teacher

2016: Julia de Burgos High School

Economic Need Index	71%
17% Students with Disabilities	
1% English Language Learners	
4% Asian	
27% Black	
64% Hispanic	
2% White	

Student Demographics

8th Grade Scores

Math — Julia de Burgos 2.49 / Citywide 2.68

ELA — Julia de Burgos 2.69 / Citywide 2.79

* pseudonym

YEAR 1: Mapping & Goals

How did Julia de Burgos High School Start?

Reviewing Data

**GRADUATION & POST-SECONDARY
ENROLLMENT**

4 yr Graduation
2016 — **93%**

Post-Secondary Enrollment
2016 — **82%**

College Ready
2016 — **32%**

Year 1 Start
Post-Secondary Destinations

- CUNY 4 year — 31%
- CUNY 2 year — 16%
- SUNY — 22%
- New York Private — 8%
- Out of State — 5%
- Did not Graduate — 7%
- Unknown — 11%

32%
GRADUATED
COLLEGE READY

ENROLLED IN
OUT OF STATE
OR
PRIVATE COLLEGES
13%

**THE COLLEGE
ENROLLMENT
GAP**

93% graduated
82% enrolled

Julia de Burgos High School's Path

The school team examined their data and made some surprising discoveries:

> *A large gap between graduation and matriculation rates*
> *College Readiness Index of only 32%*
> *Only 13% of students attending private and/or out of state colleges*

The counselor felt that there was an opportunity to increase the number of applications to private colleges through HEOP, but didn't have the existing relationships with admissions officers to help pave the path.

A mapping exercise helped the staff analyze the causes of the gap by identifying the "holes" in the existing college readiness structures. A counselor pushed into 12th grade English classes and there was an Annual College Day; that was the extent of formal college and career exploration. The push-ins were too late to make much of an impact and focused on application "to do's" rather than exploration of post-secondary choices. Students needed more time to interact with the college counselor, but she was spread thin. Some college trips and college fair visits existed, but not in the 9th and 10th grades. Students needed to see schools earlier to understand the landscape of higher education. The staff set a goal of increasing matriculation rates at well-matched post-secondary destinations. The change project would be two-fold: implementation of a 9-12 college/career exploration curriculum and development of the college office

Reviewing Goals

Discussion and Action Planning

The team then made a series of decisions designed to prioritize additional college-readiness curriculum and access to counseling. They chose to partner with College Access: Research and Action (CARA). CARA's College Inquiry Program provided a coach to support implementing a curriculum and to provide necessary professional development. The team chose college readiness topics to integrate into the curriculum, but where? Time was a serious concern. Perhaps they could add these lessons to the English classes? Teachers were already burdened with so much content to cover and the pressures of passing Regents. Advisory might be a space, but it was only 30 minutes long which wasn't nearly enough.

Moving Forward

The team ultimately chose to build on existing structures, finding clever ways to carve out time from them, and also created some new structures:

> College readiness lessons were added to the advisory curriculum for each grade, despite the limitations of the short, 30 minute advisory sessions; training for advisory leaders who didn't necessarily know much about the college process was also planned.

> The college counselor moved from pushing into English class to having her own 12th grade college seminar in the fall and 11th grade seminar in the spring (1x/week for 50 minutes).

> The school's 9th grade seminar, which was created to ease student transition to high school, would integrate topics relevant to college access and financial aid.

> The librarian, who taught a research class for 10th graders, would focus the research topic on career and college choices.

> Two in-city college trips were planned for 9th graders, as well as an in-house college fair.

Before the start of the year, the planning team members, 1 per grade, met individually with the coach for 45 minutes to plan the lesson sequence for their grade; the whole team also agreed to meet for 90 minutes after school once each month of first semester to discuss progress.

Additionally, CARA's College Bridge coach program brought two near-peer leaders to the school to support the college counselor and serve as additional resources for the over one-hundred 12th graders. The Bridge Coaches were trained to counsel seniors, track the application process, and talk candidly about the transition to college. This vastly improved the ratio of counselors to students.

"It's amazing to have the extra support, and I think our school will really benefit."

- College Counselor

Implementation
Systematically Integrating Lessons into All Grades

While there was a plan in place, as the committee tried to integrate the curriculum throughout the grades, they met with both successes and challenges.

September

Julia de Burgos High School kicked off the school year with a whole-school PD introducing the new curriculum. School leaders used representative student profiles to explore new ways to support students around college access. The staff could see for themselves where the "holes" were and were enthusiastic to begin the work.

"My Bridge Coaches have been helping students sign up for the SAT for the past three days, which has enabled me to meet with other seniors in individual college meetings, plan the SUNY Fair trip, and so much more. Their help is invaluable."

- College Counselor

October

The team began to see that drafting busy teachers to do college access work was problematic. For example, the 10th grade advisors did not start implementing the curriculum on time. To increase teacher engagement, the 10th grade lead teacher built on her existing relationships and invited her advisors to stay after school (bribing them with pizza) to meet with the coach; almost all the teachers attended and were engaged throughout the discussion of the curriculum. The librarian chosen to teach the 10th grade seminar had not elected to teach about college and career and had already planned out her syllabus for the semester. She was overwhelmed by the number of lessons related to career exploration, which she felt detracted from the time to teach research skills. She seemed most engaged when she was given license to modify lessons to use the on-line research databases already familiar to her.

November

The coach observed the impact of the school's implementation structure: the grade level leaders were not the staff who actually delivered the college readiness lessons in advisory. They were the most knowledgeable and enthusiastic members of the faculty but were not directly teaching advisory. Observations of advisory showed that implementation was spotty and inequitable. Thirty minutes a session was much too short. 11th grade got involved with other pressing items, went off track, and didn't start their advisory lessons as planned. The planning team agreed that whole-staff professional development was needed to increase teachers' capacity, knowledge, and enthusiasm. They requested that college knowledge be put on the school's professional learning calendar, resulting in a half-day PD in January with a protocol that helped teachers see the gaps between graduation and matriculation, a session on financial aid, and a "Mock Admissions Committee" activity.

January

At the end of the first semester, the librarian reported that 10th graders were bored with so much of a focus on career and pushed back on the number of lessons she was asked to conduct. For the second iteration of the 10th grade plan, the assistant principals lightened the librarian's load so the lessons felt more doable. Recognizing the teacher's desire for clear organization and structure, the coach also tried to plan the second semester early.

February

The counselor began to plan for a maternity leave in March. Although most applications would already be in, there were major concerns that the many tasks that occur after a student hits submit would not be tracked by anyone. Who would be responsible for nudging students towards the finish line? Who would supervise the Bridge Coaches? The coach convened some key staff members and a decision was made to cast the 12th grade advisors in the role of "college counselor" during the counselor's maternity leave, with the Bridge Coaches offering training to students on key items and the school's other guidance counselor filling in for the seminar class.

March

The college counselor unexpectedly left for maternity leave three weeks early. The remaining guidance counselor was trying to balance her existing workload with the college work that had been added to it. When the Coach visited a few weeks later, she was alarmed to see that the plan had fallen apart. The 12th grade team leader took a sudden medical leave; in her absence, the advisors were not aware of the important role they were charged with in the college counselor's absence. Some seniors proactively asked for help, but the majority were not getting support. There was no clear system to get information flowing between students, advisors, and the college office. To correct this, the counselor distributed a matriculation checklist, enlisting advisors to ensure each student completed one.

April

The guidance counselor and one of the assistant principals started to meet with each senior to review acceptances and aid packages. Many of the students were reluctant to bring their financial aid letters to the counselor, yet the May 1st acceptance deadline was fast approaching. The counselor hoped students would be more keen to talk with their advisors and began updating the college tracking database regularly to generate reports on student progress. She distributed these reports to 12th grade advisors to nudge them to offer their advisees robust support.

May

The counselor and advisor were now working in sync, and by mid-May 86% of seniors had chosen a college and made a deposit. The 11th grade lead teacher had busily planned a parent night for juniors, ensured juniors had draft CUNY and SUNY lists, and planned to enlist the Parent Coordinator to gather financial documents from parents over the summer.

Looking Forward

During June and over the summer, the team will gather data from the Class of 2017 and reflect on the results of the year's work. Next Year's Goals: Expand private school matriculation and Increase peer-to-peer learning about college between seniors and younger students.

Problem of Practice

The college counselor felt overwhelmed and spread thin during application season and found that while her Bridge Coaches were equipped with many skills, there were also a set of things they weren't prepared to take on independently. The team developed some potential solutions:

> The counselor could deploy the coaches to help seniors with CUNY applications (where they were most knowledgeable), freeing herself to help students develop lists of private colleges. Perhaps the Parent Coordinator could do more parent outreach to get family financial information so that the Bridge Coaches could do work one-on-one on FAFSA with the students who already had their paperwork together.

> The assistant principal, recognizing that strong supervision wasn't yet in that counselor's skill set, offered to help the counselor prepare for her mid-year planning meeting with her Bridge Coaches.

These steps helped them to feel that other staff members were invested in the success of the program and were there to support her.

Julia de Burgos High School
9–12 CARA Curriculum Mapping Chart

PROGRAM	9th Grade:	10th Grade:	11th Grade:	12th Grade:
Mapping the Landscape of College	*Fall: 9th Grade Seminar* • Surveying Student Knowledge about College • College Sort • College in America: Myths & Realities • First in the Family Video • College Interviews • College Visits: Pre/During/Post	*Spring: 10th Grade Seminar* • College Sort • College Visits: Pre/ During/Post • CUNY Scavenger Hunt • SUNY Scavenger Hunt • Comparing Colleges: Using collegeboard.org • College Interviews (advisory) • Surveying Student Knowledge about College (advisory)	*Fall: Advisory* • College Sort • College Matching • CUNY Scavenger Hunt • SUNY Scavenger Hunt • College Interview • First in the Family Video • College Visits: Pre/During/Post	*Spring: Advisory* • Using College Resources • What Are For-Profit Colleges? • First in the Family – The College Years • What is a Syllabus? (ELA) • Hold Fast to Dreams Discussion Guide (ELA)
College Application Process	*Fall: 9th Grade Seminar* • Activity Log (spring – ELA) • Year Ahead Plan (fall – advisory) • Transcript Review (spring – advisory) • Summer Plan (advisory)	*Spring: 10th Grade Seminar* • What's in a College Application • Mock Admissions • Transcript Review (fall – advisory) • Activity Log (ELA)	*Spring: 11th Grade Seminar* • Exploring College Majors • Reach, Match, Safety: Matching Students with Schools • Making a CUNY List • Making a SUNY List • Private List Making (1/3 of class) • Transcript review (fall – advisory) • Personal Statement (spring – ELA) • Activity Log (ELA)	*Fall: 12th Grade Seminar* • College Application Steps • Completing CUNY Application (w/ELA) • Completing SUNY Application (w/ELA) • Completing Common Application (w/after school) • After Hitting "Submit" • Future Plan (advisory)
Paying for College	*Fall: 9th Grade Seminar* • College Costs: Public vs. Private	*Spring: 10th Grade Seminar* • What's in a College Application • Mock Admissions • Transcript Review (fall – advisory) • Activity Log (ELA)	*Spring: 11th Grade Seminar* • Steps to Applying for Financial Aid • What are Opportunity Programs? • College Costs: Public vs. Private	*Fall: Senior Seminar* • Looking at FAFSA and Prep • Steps to Applying for Financial Aid • FAFSA Completion (w/ELA and parent workshops) • Making Sense of Financial Aid Package Letters • Loans & Interest Rates (Econ) • Paying Back Loans (Econ) • Looking at College Bills & Budgets (Econ)
Exploring Careers	*Fall: 9th Grade Seminar* • On Line Career Exploration	*Fall: Literacy/Research* • Career Jeopardy • Career Sort • Investigating Your Career Interests Parts 1, 2, 3 • Career Interview (w/Career Day)	*Spring: Advisory* • Career Jeopardy • Career Interest Survey • Career Sort • Exploring College Majors • Majors and Career Pathways • Career Day	*Spring: Advisory* • Majors & Career Pathways (in advisory) • Career Day (prep in advisory)
Milestones	• College Trip: 10/22 to Manhattan College • College Trip: Spring to Baruch or City College	• College trip to be planned for grade to two colleges		
Assessment (Turned into Seminar teacher and compiled on-line or paper portfolio. Advisors to turn in to Seminar Instructors.)	• Write up interview • College Obs. Guide (x2) • Activity Log • Year Ahead Plan • Career Interest Survey • Summer Plan	• College Obs. Guide (x2) • Personal Profile • College Board Account Info • Activity Log • Year Ahead Plan • Summer Plan • Career Research Project	• Annotated College List • Personal Statement • Junior Income Form • FSAID created • Activity Log • Year Ahead Plan • Summer Plan	• Future Plan (Spring)