

High Hopes and Higher Education Honoring Black Students' Aspirations



About the documentary

Black students have high postsecondary aspirations but face many barriers along their path to educational success.^{1,2} In collaboration with Wisconsin Public Television, Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest created a 25-minute television documentary about evidence-based interventions taking place in high schools and colleges to help Black students reach their postsecondary goals. The documentary highlights Black students' experiences in both high school and college in Madison, Wisconsin.

Researchers Jameela Conway-Turner, PhD (REL Midwest) and Deborah Faye Carter, PhD (Claremont Graduate University) discuss promising practices that educators can use to support Black students on their path to postsecondary education, including embracing culturally responsive education, communicating high expectations, and developing strong student–teacher relationships. The program features stories from student and educator members of the Minority Student Achievement Network as well as students and staff who are a part of the Precollege Enrichment Opportunity Program for Learning Excellence (PEOPLE) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The barrier isn't that Black students are not capable, or have the potential. It's just that they don't have the support.

—Gail Ford, Assistant Director for Precollege, Precollege Enrichment Opportunity Program for Learning Excellence (PEOPLE), University of Wisconsin-Madison

Intended audience

REL Midwest created this documentary as a tool for K–12 and postsecondary educators, parents, and students to learn about evidence-based approaches to support Black students as they prepare for postsecondary education. The documentary focuses on examples from Wisconsin, but the information and evidence shared in the program offer important learnings for people and groups based outside the state. REL Midwest hopes viewers will watch the program and use the following questions as a starting point for a discussion on how to support Black students' pathways to college.

Discussion questions

- What concepts or themes from the documentary resonate with you?
- What are your reactions to the approaches and strategies presented in the documentary?
- What challenges do you see in preparing Black students and other students of color, including Latino students, for postsecondary pathways? What are possible ways to overcome these challenges?
- What approaches to preparing Black students and other students of color for college have worked in your school, district, or state?
- What types of supports are needed to prepare students academically and socially for postsecondary education? How might the preparation differ depending on the type of institution a student plans to attend?
- How can high schools and higher education institutions partner more effectively to prepare Black students for postsecondary success?

About REL Midwest

REL Midwest is part of a network of 10 regional educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. REL Midwest works in partnership with practitioners in seven Midwest states to conduct applied research and provide training, coaching, and technical support to create a more evidence-based education system. Visit the REL Midwest website to learn more: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/default.aspx>.

This material was prepared under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0007 by Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest, administered by American Institutes for Research. The content of the publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.

¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2017). *Race for results: Building a path to opportunity for all children. 2017 Policy Report, Kids Count*. Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2019, from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED582131>.

² Schneider, B., & Saw, G. (2016). Racial and ethnic gaps in postsecondary aspirations and enrollment. *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 2(5), 58–82.