Creating a Heterogeneous Classroom

Student Category Guidelines

Adherence to the *Student Selection Guidelines* is vital to the Puente Project mission.

Creating a heterogeneous college preparatory classroom

The Puente counselor and teacher(s) collaborate in selecting a cohort of students who represent a range of effort and performance levels. Students in a heterogeneous classroom are more likely to grow academically if the class is properly balanced. Students benefit by experiencing each other's strengths and weaknesses. In the process of researching the strengths and challenges students have to offer, it is important to focus on the **whole student** and to balance all the considerations listed in this document. Student selection should not be determined by any single factor.

Creating a heterogeneous community requires balancing student characteristics across ranges of:
- levels of academic performance
- degrees of motivation
- understanding access to and benefits of higher education
- parental support
- gender

Puente Student Categories

In order to select a heterogeneous classroom, the counselor reviews student transcripts, test scores, parent/guardian and student application and interviews, teacher letter of recommendation, and attendance records to sort the applicants into 1 of the following 4 categories:

1. High Achievement/ High Motivation
2. High Achievement/ Low Motivation
3. Low Achievement/ High Motivation
4. Low Achievement/ Low Motivation

With collaboration from the Puente teacher(s), the counselor selects a mixed ability class with an equal distribution among the Puente (1-4) student categories, taking into consideration gender distribution (and using a lottery system if necessary).

Keep in mind, that while Puente recognizes that the middle schools from which we draw students vary considerably, and teams have some discretion in this selection process, the overall objective remains to create a heterogeneous classroom which draws one quarter of its students from each category and is approximately balanced by gender.

Factors to Consider

It is also recognized that identifying category characteristics of a student does not predetermine a student's performance in the program, and that students bring much more to the classroom community than a designated Student Category. The student category should never be shared beyond the Puente team.

The *Student Selection Guidelines* provides complete details on the student recruitment and selection process. Student selection is a critical part of the Puente high school program and success depends on creating a strong heterogeneous group of students. Adherence to the *Student Selection Guidelines* is vital to the success of the Puente High School Project. The Puente Project understands that teams are ultimately responsible for student selection and supporting all students selected.

The recruitment and selection process is very labor intensive and requires cooperation from the feeder middle/junior high school(s). School-site administrators can support this process by sending a letter of introduction to middle/junior high school(s) principals requesting that they identify a contact person who can provide the necessary student data, help coordinate student and parent meetings, and facilitate the application process.

Students must be enrolled a minimum of one year in the Puente College Preparatory English course in order to be officially on the Puente roster. No student can be added to the Puente roster if she/he has not been enrolled in the class for a minimum of one year.

Student Category Guidelines

Vital to the success of the PUENTE High School Program

Benefits of a heterogeneous college preparatory classroom:

- Students are more likely to grow academically when the class is intentionally balanced

- Students benefit from each other's strengths and weaknesses

Throughout the selection process:

- Important to focus on the whole student

- Balance all the considerations

- Selection should not be determined by any single factor

Creating a heterogeneous community requires balance of student characteristics across ranges of:

- Levels of academic performance

- Degrees of motivation

- Understanding access to and benefits of higher education

- Parental support

- Gender

Student selection criteria should not be shared with students and families.

Student Category Guidelines

CATEGORY 1 - (25%)	CATEGORY 2 - (25%)
High Performance/ High Motivation-Effort	**High Performance/ Low Motivation-Effort**
<u>Indicators</u>:	<u>Indicators</u>:
Teacher Recommendation Strong attendance Involved in school Teacher knows parents Strong positive remarks (attitude, behavior)	**Teacher Recommendation** Strong attendance Somewhat involved in school Serious-with potential Recognizes potential, and lack of effort Late bloomer
Scores/Grades Mostly A's and B's or equiv. Strong standardized test scores (TBD) A or B in Pre-Algebra or higher Reading 7th – 8th grade level	**Scores/Grades** A's, B's, C's (inconsistent) Strong to avg. standardized test scores (TBD) A or B in Pre-Algebra or higher
Interview Self-reported motivation is high Individual desire to participate in Puente Understands Puente Is goal oriented	**Interview** Questionable motivation (peer/partner pressure) Undefined goals Hesitant/procrastinates May not understand Puente Acknowledges lack of effort

CATEGORY 3 – (25%)	CATEGORY 4 – (25%)
Low Performance/High Motivation-Effort	**Low Performance /Low Motivation**
<u>Indicators</u>:	<u>Indicators</u>:
Teacher Recommendation Average attendance Little or no school involvement Recognizes potential and lack of effort Student lacks prior educational opportunities Needs support	**Teacher Recommendation** Low attendance Values survival vs. academics-street smart Lacks knowledge of higher education Leadership potential Currently no desire for reaching a college education Possible discipline issues
Scores/Grades Mostly C-'s or equiv. Average standardized test score (TBD) Average grade in Pre-Algebra/Algebra	**Scores/Grades** Mostly C-/Ds or equiv. Avg. to low standardized test score (TBD) Low grade in Pre-Algebra/Algebra
Interview Self-reported motivation Understanding of Puente and desires to participate Frustrated with performance	**Interview** Does not understand Puente fully Dubious about Puente Excels in something