The Power Behind PowerSchool:
Where Privilege Lies

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This curriculum unit is recommended for Middle and High school level mathematics classes

Keywords: statistics, measures of center, averages, grade point average

Teaching Standards: See Appendix 1 for the teaching standards used in this unit.

Synopsis: When white people are afforded opportunities that others are not simply because they were born white, that is known as white privilege. These opportunities are inherited through white privilege, not earned, thus putting others at a disadvantage. Such is true in the education system. The purpose of this unit is not to make the privileged feel ashamed or guilty or to make anyone feel "less than". Quite to the contrary, the purpose of this unit is to empower scholars to advocate for themselves by understanding the nuances involved with all of the numbers kept in PowerSchool. I believe that teaching ninth graders the importance of parental involvement, school attendance, the history of standardized testing, grade point average, as well as how to calculate and track their grade point averages will have an impact on their respective high school experiences to yield a strong, positive correlation.

I plan to teach this unit to 80 ninth grade scholars during the 2019-2020 school year. One third of these scholars will then teach it to a middle school class.

I give permission for the Charlotte Teachers Institute to publish my curriculum unit and synopsis in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work.

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Introduction

Rationale

Cochrane Collegiate Academy is in an area of Charlotte, NC, that has a high concentration of people living in poverty. All too often, parents are so busy supporting their families that they don't take time to support their student. Students often are coming to Cochrane with levels of understanding below the district and state average. As a teacher of iMeck, and a former teacher of Cochrane, I am concerned about the future of the students attending this Title 1 school. They do not come to the school prepared with the foundational skills necessary to be successful and they a lack the sense of urgency. Once in high school, they lack the ability to see long term and to understand that each course is important. They don't seem to understand the connectedness of it all. They each have a story and can only see the part of the story that they are in right now.

I had a coworker who moved from my very diverse Title 1 school to a more affluent and predominantly white school. We teach the same content and still keep in touch. In conversation, she has mentioned some of the differences between the schools. Her predominantly white scholars are totally vested in their education and behavior is not a concern. The parents of her scholars contact her constantly to discuss something that was entered into PowerSchool. Does the parental involvement of her scholars positively correlate with their level of investment? Do they really benefit from white privilege, in the sense that they understand the need for parental involvement because of their affluent predominantly white school? Does the fact that parents rarely contact me directly correlate with the level of investment of my scholars?

PowerSchool is an information system that allows access to real-time information including grades, attendance, demographics, schedules, detailed assignments, school bulletins and grade point average. Since the system is a web based, information is populated by Charlotte Mecklenburg School District, respective schools and individual teachers. There are two PowerSchool components, Student Portal and Parent Portal, which makes the database easy and safe to be shared with and accessed by scholars and parents. The database is used to manage all demographic and academic information while the scholar is actively enrolled in the school district.

Throughout the CMS school district, going back to the adoption of the new management system, schools have offered classes, webinars, flyers, pamphlets, mass mailings and phone calls all urging parents to enroll in PowerSchool. I was unable to find data on the number of parents enroll in PowerSchool Parent Portal for my district or my school. Of those who do enroll, I, unfortunately, found no research depicting the correlation of those who sign up for Parent Portal and those who actually is the tool.

We have several opportunities to meet with parents throughout the year. During open house and parent conferences, we always ask parents if they can access their scholar's grades and attendance information. Parents typically respond as though they are hearing it for the first time. So we, the

teacher or counselor, walk them through the process and give them the necessary code for their scholar however, this still does not insure that the portal is being used. Again, I work at a wonderful Title 1 school with hardworking teachers, however, the majority of our scholars belong to ethnic groups that are not white and receive free and reduced lunch, which categorizes them as economically disadvantaged.

From the onset, I realized the importance of creating a curriculum unit to those categorized as economically disadvantaged. Originally, my goal in this curriculum unit was to teach my scholars the academic and content specific vocabulary needed to be successful in math class and on the end of course test. Historically, the end of grade test had examples that did not pertain to the lives of the scholars that I teach. In looking at the NC Math 1 North Carolina End of Course Assessment, published October 2018, and reflecting on the seminar, Frankly Speaking: White Privilege, I realize that my goal is to equip freshman with the knowledge to understand that education is the equalizer.

In this curriculum unit, the Power of PowerSchool: Where Privilege Lies, I plan to focus on content to be taught at various times throughout the school year, all surrounding scholar ownership and self-advocacy. Instead of the focus being vocabulary, I have changed the focus to grade point average and teaching scholars how to use PowerSchool as asset and not a liability. It is my hope that the overall impact will help scholars understand "why" education is emphasized by every teacher and that every course matters. It is also my hope that through self-advocacy scholars will take greater ownership of their future.

I realize that I cannot evoke this type of change by myself. As a Math 1 teacher, I have specific standards that scholars have to master and GPA is not one of them. Through the seminar I gained a better understanding on the impact privilege has on education. For this PowerSchool initiative to be successful, my administrators and colleagues must also acknowledge this privilege. It is imperative that this subject matter is discussed in a manner that does not causes division, place blame or require apology.

Understanding the history and the underlying implication of white privilege will make some uncomfortable. However, "well-prepared beginning teachers of mathematics understand the roles of power, privilege, and oppression in the history of mathematics education and are equipped to question existing educational systems that produce inequitable learning experiences and outcomes for students…They are prepared to ask questions as needed to understand current policies and practices to raise awareness of potentially inequitable practices. These practices are particularly important related to students who are Black, Latino, American Indian, emergent multilingual, or students living in poverty." (Standards for Preparing Teachers of Mathematics, page 23).

School Demographics

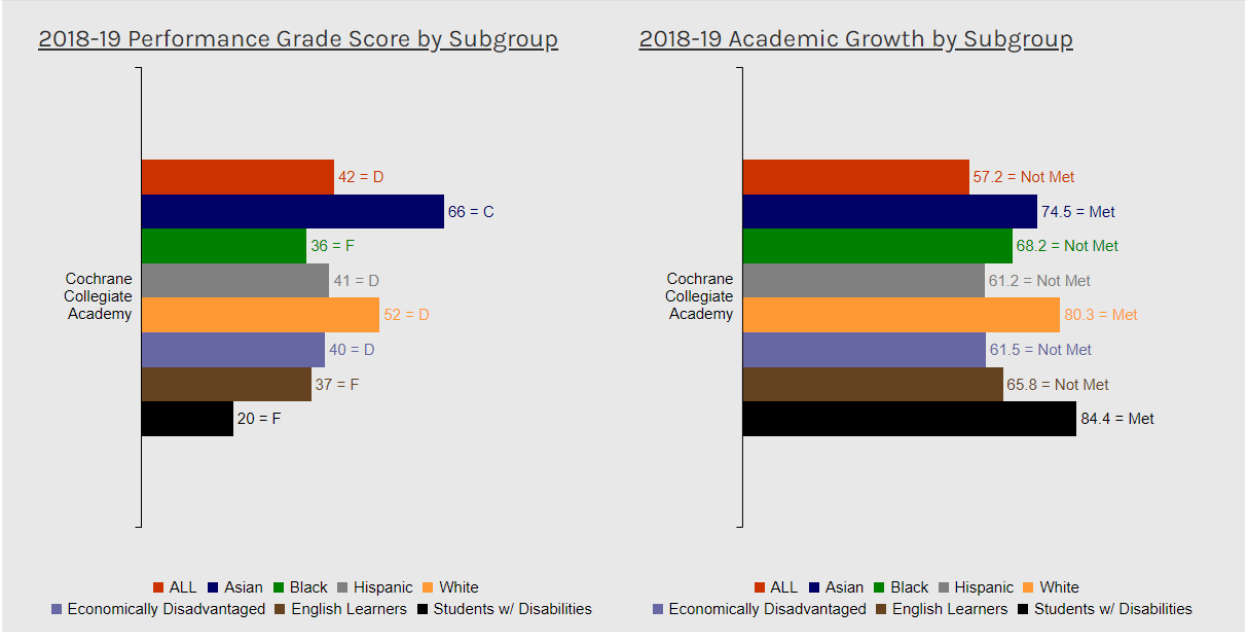
Cochrane Collegiate Academy is located at 6200 Starhaven Drive. Cochrane Collegiate Academy is a Title I School based on the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and receives Title I federal funds. These funds provide supplementary resources to students attending the school to support their education. It serves students in grades 6-12. Though it is both a middle and high school, the schools operate as two totally separate, standalone entities. Each school has their own respective team of teachers, mascot, bell schedules and sports. Scholars share the cafeteria and some elective teachers.

The Cochrane middle school is a public school while the high school is a magnet school known as iMeck Academy. As of the 2019-2020 school year, there are approximately 900 scholars attending Cochrane Collegiate Academy. According to Michelle Young, Assistant Principle at Cochrane, there are approximately 600 in the middle school and 300 in the high school (Young, 2019).

iMeck serves students using a blended teaching approach; traditional brick and mortar, teacher led instruction with hands-on technology and virtual learning. iMeck is a technology rich progressive environment with rigorous curriculum. The full gamut of courses are offered to include honors, advanced placement as well as virtual online-courses. The goal is to meet students where they are and give them the tools to be college and career ready. All students are exposed to various career options, have the opportunity to network with business leaders and gain real-life experience through internship programs.

The mission is the same for both schools. The mission is to obtain academic success through student responsibility, parent involvement and teacher support. Cochrane is "A 5-STAR School Providing 5-STAR Service". The schools also share a grade on the overall North Carolina School Report Card performance evaluation.

According to the North Carolina School Report Card, Cochrane received a grade of a D rating for the 2018-2019 school year with a performance grade score of 42%. This is an improvement from the F grading received in the previous year with a performance grading score of 38%. Unfortunately, academic growth was "not met" according to the data, but it is important to note that there was growth from the 2017 school year to the 2018 school year. According to the data extracted from the Cochrane's NC School Report Card, the white scholars, which are the minority at Cochrane, met academic growth, along with scholars with disabilities in the 2018-2019 school year.



Courtesy of https://ncreportcards.ondemand.sas.com/src/school?school=600341&year=2019&lng=en. Accessed November 25, 2019.

Cochrane Collegiate Academy houses two schools. Cochran's primary elementary feeder schools include Lawrence Orr, Hickory and Devonshire. Cochrane Collegiate Academy middle school is

the predominant feeder school to iMeck Academy. Regardless of these facts, Cochrane Collegiate Academy is a 6-12 school, in as such, all school demographics spans grades 6 through 12.

This is also true of the data collected and referenced on the recent North Carolina School Report Card. As a 6-12 school, the NC Report Card compares 6th and 9th graders at the beginning of the school year to 6th and 9th graders entering schools across the state. The goal is to show a scholar's readiness at the beginning to the school year. The results are as follows.

- 30.2% of 6th Grade scholars are considered proficient when they enroll in Cochrane.
- 46.6% of 6th Grade scholars are considered proficient when enrolling in schools across the state of North Carolina.
- 25% of 9th Grade scholars are considered proficient when they enroll in Cochrane.
- 40.9% of 6th Grade scholars are considered proficient when enrolling in schools across the state of North Carolina.
- 50.5% of scholars attending Cochrane or iMeck are economically disadvantaged.
- 46.5% of scholars across the state are economically disadvantaged.

Grade level proficiency, as I understand it, requires a scholar to earn at least a level 3 out of 5, on the both reading and math end of grade (EOG) tests. Cochrane and iMeck are both well below the states' proficiency level. Looking at the situation from a positive perspective, Cochrane scholars begin their middle school or high school experience with an opportunity to demonstration great academic growth. The fact that half of our scholars are economically disadvantages further supports the need to strategically teach more than just content to support them.

Curriculum Unit Goals

My goal as an educator is to positively influence the lives of scholars through relationship building and education. Very similarly, the focus of this curriculum unit is to teach the "whole" scholar to care about their education by understanding why education is important and how education is both an equalizer and a success indicator. To accomplish this, I will teach scholars how to access their "numbers" in PowerSchool, thus unmasking its power.

PowerSchool is where scholars, teachers and parents can access data regarding their respective school lives. It holds a wealth of information, which includes, but is not limited to, attendance, tardies, age, demographics, grades, standardized test scores and grade point average. In this information age, it is my experience that scholars of color are not taught how to use the database system to their benefit, and neither are their parents. Their white counterparts are privileged because they are taught the connection between PowerSchool numbers and college and career readiness. The privileged use these "numbers" as success indicators and begin at a much younger age.

The unit was not created to teach in consecutive order; it is designed to be taught throughout the year or semester. It will take some creative planning to teach it while teaching required standards. For example, I have taught it on early released dates, as a warm up and I have assigned components as homework. Scholars benefit from spreading the unit over a year or semester because it gives them a sense of urgency-based frequency of the unit and makes them knowledgeable based on the multiple representations.

The Power of PowerSchool: Privilege Lies Curriculum Unit Goals

Learning Essential Question	Goal
Are your scholars privileged?	For the purpose of this unit, the privileged include anyone who can voluntarily extract the numbers, or the power, of PowerSchool and benefit from that use. By the end of this section, teachers can determine if the curriculum unit is necessary. Station Rotation is the strategy used in this section.
What's in PowerSchool?	By the end of this section, scholars will understand that numbers are the currency needed for success. They will learn how to extract the power of PowerSchool learn how to use them as an asset. Strategies used in this section include Switch Sides If… and Lean in Circles.
Does white privilege exist?	By learning the history of standardize testing and grade point averages, scholars will realize that their white counterpart benefited from privilege. Strategies used in this section include Golden Line and 1-2-3 Reflection Strategy
What is Grade Point Average?	By the end of this section, scholars will be able to: • Effectively communicate the definition of grade point average • Calculate the grade point average based on current courses • Understand why it's important to monitor grade point average • Set goals regarding their predicted grade point averages at the end of quarter • Wellness check to see if goal is on track when progress reports are distributed GPA Worksheet located in Appendix2
How is GPA a predictor?	By the end of this section, scholars will be able to: • Predict the measure of center needed to reach a specific grade point average. • Read a transcript • Calculate GPA based on a transcript • Create a linear regression model to calculate the grade point average (extension activity) • Visualize the consequences of not calculating your grade point average (the power of zero in a data set). • Navigate scenarios involving grade point averages of both weighted and unweighted courses
How does my grade point average impact the college admission process?	By the end of this section, scholars will understand and calculate the correlation between grade point average, school activities and community involvement.
How can I share what learned?	By the end of this section, scholar will pay it forward by sharing what they learned about grade point average. The concept of Pay It Forward is

	intentionally broad to give scholars an opportunity to determine the best course of action to complete the task.

Content Research

While reading Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime*, there were so many parts that resonated with me but none rang true like this passage. Noah's mom was often asked, *"Why teach a black child white things?... Why do all this?"* In a similar fashion, neighbors and relatives of Trevor Noah's family would ask his mother, *"Why show him the world when he's never going to leave the ghetto?" "Because,"* she would say, *"even if he never leaves the ghetto, he will know that the ghetto is not the world. If that is all I accomplished, I've done enough."* (Noah 2016: 74).

In his book Noah openly and eloquently discusses how he was literally born a crime since his South African mom and Swedish dad decided to disobey the laws of apartheid and have a "coloured" kid. Please note, coloured does not have the same negative connotation in South Africa as the word colored has in the United States. In South African, it simply implied that you are not white or black, your complexion is a mixture of the two, thus you are coloured. Trevor had a complexion much lighter than his mother and African cousins. This resulted in his "colored" classification, more specifically, Noah was considered "almost white." (Noah 2016: 118).

He was able to be what Lugones (1987) calls a "world traveler" and was able to change his language, demeanor and code switch when in a different environments or settings. He had no other choice but to yield to other people's perceptions. Either he was perceived to be a black boy surrounded by white culture while residing in the black community or as a white boy immersed in tribal black culture living in the white community. Though he was at ease whenever he was with his family in Soweto, his mom had to raise him in a coloured community for his own safety. Trevor benefited from white privilege. Per Shannon Sullivan, author of White Privilege, "white privilege is "white people having unfair advantages because of their whiteness....[at the same time that] white privilege is never just about whiteness" (Sullivan 2019: 7, 25).

According to McIntosh (1990), white people are taught not to recognize their white privilege, but Noah did not have a choice. His mother wanted him to experience the world. Noah's privilege allowed him to frequent white churches, go ice-skating and walk the streets at night without being harassed. When he went to the park, his mom had to dress as though she was his nanny as to not arouse suspicion. More importantly, he was able to attend private schools for all of elementary and middle school. Over everything else, his mom wanted him to have what she had to fight for, a quality education.

Noah grew up knowing that education was the equalizer and as an inherent benefit of being coloured, or almost white, he was able to receive a quality education. By definition, he benefited from white privilege. Like Trevor's mom, education was something that my parents stressed. They always had high expectations for me, as did my teachers. I remember getting my first report as a sixth grader in Rosa L. Parks Middle School, in a Chicago suburb. My grades looked something like this.

Course	**English**	**Math**	**Social Studies**	**Science**	**Spanish**	**Chorus**	**GPA**

Grade	A	A	A	A	A	A	4.0

This was normal because I was an A student, enrolled in honors classes. However, there was something on my report card that I had never seen before, it read "GPA: 4.0". Here it is that I had all A's and could not celebrate. I was so perplexed by the meaning of this GPA on my paper.

I have absolutely no idea what this meant. I knew it was an acronym but had no idea what it was or why it was necessary. I didn't know if a 4.0 was a good score. If it was on a scale of one to ten, then a 4 was rather low. Unfortunately, I was too embarrassed to admit that I didn't know what it meant. Pride did not allow me to ask my classmates or my teachers.

My sister was in eighth grade at the same school. We had our own separate friends that we sat with on the bus but this day, I needed to sit with her. After school, I had to hurry to the bus so that I could get a seat right next to her. When I arrived at the bus, I was so glad to see the seat was vacant. My sister could tell that I was hurried and reflected a look of concern on her face. She asked me "what did you get on your report card?" I told her that I got all A's but that there were three letters "GPA" written on the bottom. She was all smiles but noticed that I was not.

I showed her my report card. She looked at it for a moment, looked at her report card, then looked at mine again. As the school bus drove us to our destination, my sister explained the acronym to me. She told me that that was my grade point average or GPA. She took out a piece of paper and as she explained the point assignment, she wrote it on the paper. She said, "your GPA takes all of your grades and uses math to summarize it. Each letter has a point value from 0 to 4, with 4 being the an A and 0 for an F. To calculate it, add all the letter point values and then divide." She also said, "you will need a high GPA to get into a decent school when you graduate high school." When I got home, my parents confirmed what my sister told me. The next day, I went to school and taught all of my friends and classmates what GPA was, showed them how to calculate it and explained why it was necessary.

In this instance, I benefited from privilege. It was not white privilege but the fact that I was taught how to calculate my GPA subconsciously made me aware of the connectedness of grades. I would compete against myself to attain the highest GPA possible. Since I was able to use it to my advantage, I had privilege that my counterparts did not have. As a result, I had great success in school because I understood the importance of tracking my GPA. I tracked it from middle school to college graduation, through my Master's program and teaching certification.

Fast forward to present day. I have been teaching for CMS for eight years. Thinking back on all of my years of teaching, I have rarely heard anyone talk about grade point average. That includes conversations with administrators, teachers and scholars. I can only surmise that it is not a North Carolina topic of discussion. Upon examining the report cards of my kids, who attend CMS schools, GPA is not a printed on their report card, neither is class ranking, as it was on mine from sixth grade until senior year of high school. I did notice that by the end of the first semester of high school, GPA is available in PowerSchool but not many scholars look at it and understand its meaning.

"Over the past 30 years, a large body of research has shown that four factors consistently influence student achievement: all else equal, students perform better if they are educated in smaller schools where they are well known (300 to 500 students is optimal), have smaller class sizes (especially at

the elementary level), receive a challenging curriculum, and have more highly qualified teachers." (Darling-Hammond 1998). In the United States, fair is still not equal and equal is not equitable. Most schools in the United States are formed geographically, or by neighborhood, both ethnicity and social class segregate the neighborhood schools. It is a vicious cycle that allows white privilege to continue to permeate within education.

To break the cycle, and to fix what is wrong with public education, we need to parents to be actively involved. Parents can disrupt the system if they had access to the same level of information as their white counterparts. According to City Trends (2013), if the household income increases, the level of involvement in school activities also increases. The majority of Cochrane's students are economically disadvantaged where the household income is at or below the federal poverty level. Inversely, "the lower participation by nonwhite parents may reflect an inability to attend school functions rather than any desire (or lack thereof) to participate in their children's education. Nonwhite parents are less likely to have flexible work schedules" (City Trends 2013).

As teachers, we have to change our mindset and get rid of underlying assumptions. We must not assume that as scholars get older, their level of self-advocacy increases by thinking that they should know better. Teaching scholars how to advocate for themselves helps to create lifelong learners. Most scholars, regardless of their age, want the approval and respect of their parents and are extrinsically motivated by parental expectations or grades. Alternating bi-monthly scholar led conferences and parental contact motivates scholars a little bit harder. The ultimate goal is for scholars to transition from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation. "Intrinsic motivation involves engaging in a behavior because it is personally rewarding; essentially, performing an activity for its own sake rather than the desire for some external reward. Essentially, the behavior itself is its own reward" (Cherry 2019).

We cannot assume that parents do not care or are not involved in the life of the scholar. To the contrary, we must know that every parent wants their child to be successful. I realize that assuming that parents are busy working to support their family, takes some of the responsibility off parents, and redirects it to teachers. However, I have found that building that relationship with the parent and giving them the tools needed to parent in this technological age often yields an increase in parental involvement.

In as such, each iMeck teacher has an advisory class of scholars. The goal is to conduct scholars led conferences bi-monthly regarding "school life" with the main emphasis being grades. Prior to the conference, scholars are required to provide written documentation if they are struggling in any class. During the student led conference, I access their grades and let them explain their grades and devise a plan to make corrections. All of this is written on a note card, along with their name, date of conference and guardian contact information. The note cards make it easier for me to provide an accurate representation of the scholar's progress report. Please note that type of contact is at the discretion of the teacher that could include a parent conference with or without the scholar, text or phone call. Texting, or calling, with google voice works well for parent contact. It allows me to translate messages into any native language and archives all conversations.

It is important to contact parents of scholars who has less than 60% for standard classes and 70% for AP or Honors classes. It is our hope that this will give parents the upper hand and allow them to engage in an educational conversation to motivate the scholar. During the conversation, I reference the note card that, from the student led conference and instead of having them create

their own PowerSchool in Parent Portal, I remind them that scholars can to login to their respective accounts and access grades, attendance, tardies and GPA.

It is just as imperative to celebrate those who are doing well and meeting the expectation in the same manner. Positive phone calls make parents happy and help to foster relationships with scholars. I contact the parents of scholars who are doing well on a monthly basis. I also take the time to notify parents when a scholar's positive progress toward the academic expectation.

I have also found that teaching a scholar to be reflective and honest about their grades only strengthens our relationship. My goal is NEVER to get them in trouble. I always state the positive attributes of the scholar as a buffer. They appreciate the fact that I care enough about them to help until they can learn to help themselves.

Once we have a system to increase parental involvement, we must give scholars tools toward self-advocacy. The ultimate goal is for scholars to require less parental contact involving redirection and allowing teacher to have contact that is more positive with parents. Learning the history and use of standardized testing and quantitative test scores in the United States is a way to help them understand the need for teacher/parent oversight. The articles "The Racist Beginnings of Standardized Testing" (Rosales 2018) and "Report: Higher Education Creates 'White Racial Privilege'" (Bidwell 2013) provide an account of the creation and evolution of standardized testing.

During World War I, Psychologist Carl Brigham helped to develop aptitude tests for the United States Army. The creation of Scholastic Aptitude Test, commonly known as the SAT, suggested that white people were much more intelligent than African Americans and the immigrants that were migrating to the United States from Europe. The test scores reinforced the need for racial segregation amongst the men participating in the United States Army. "The U.S. Bureau of Education reported in 1925 that intelligence and achievement tests were increasingly used to classify students at all levels" (Rosales 2018).

The SAT originally was an aptitude test, meaning that it tested the ability to learn as opposed to testing the mastery of content (Rosales 2018). The SAT gained popularity because it provided statistics to reinforce the need for segregation based on intelligence. In other words, it was used as a reason to continue to allow whites to be separated from other ethnicities by limiting access to school admission.

Standardized tests made in evolution to include multiple-choice questions. Received with criticism, this evolution either allowed people to guess answers or the questions themselves were racially biased. The test continued to evolve and the use expanded to schools and eventually colleges and universities. In 1934 Harvard University, one of the most prestigious universities in the country, adopted the test as a determining factor for scholarships.

The SAT, along with the American College Testing, ACT and AP Examinations are college admission testing requirements created to promote white privilege. Historically, brown and black scholars, especially those from low-income households, are at a disadvantage when taking standardized tests in the United States. "Decades of research demonstrates that African-American, Latino, and Native American students, as well as students from some Asian groups, experience bias from standardized tests administered from early childhood through college," according to

Rosales (2018). As expected, when taking admissions tests scholars of color scored lower scores in comparison to their white counterparts. The lower scores were used to deny admission and prevent scholars of color from receiving academic and merit-based scholarships.
With the progressions made to eradicate the underlying privilege, more progress needed to be attained. According to Allie Bidwell, staff writer for U.S. News and World Report, more minorities are entering higher education however, white scholars are entering the elite, well-funded universities at a disproportionate rate. It seems as though white flight is infiltrating higher education (Bidwell 2013). "Whites are over-represented in the nation's 468 most selective and well-funded colleges and are increasingly vacating the less selective open-access, two- and four-year colleges, which admit a majority of their applicants. On the other hand, African-American and Hispanic students are concentrated at 3,250 of these open-access colleges," according to the article (2013).

Bidwell also speaks to the lack of equity in higher education, regardless of qualifications. After high school, many scholars are not prepared to attend college. However, whites, who are in that same category of being unprepared, still afforded opportunities that scholars of color are not. The report also mentioned that "African-Americans and Hispanics with a high school grade point average of 3.5 or higher attended community colleges, only 22 percent of whites with the same GPA attended the same level of schooling" (Bidwell 2013). This is an important fact because elite colleges and universities spend more money on instruction than other colleges and universities. The investment that elite colleges make is to ensure that scholars graduate with a degree.

Prior to entering higher education, colleges and universities analyze standardized test scores and grade point averages of high school scholars to determine admission. Scholars of color must combat the same privilege that soldiers and college scholars endured. Most public schools in the United States, does not matter the type of school (preschool, elementary school, middle or high school) has a system of underlying privilege that scholars of color must work harder than their counter parts to be considered on the same level as their white counter part.

Grading systems around the world are similar in the sense that they are average based. The major difference is that the averages are expressed in different representations. For example, the United States, Canada, Thailand and Saudi Arabia use an alphabet system of A-F. The Netherlands, Colombia, Latvia and Israel use a numeric system ranging from 1-10. While Germany, Austria, Russia, Slovakia, Paraguay uses a numeric system ranging from 1-5. Percentages are used in in Kuwait, Belgium, Hungary and Poland (Potter, 2017). Knowing the system, one can use a conversion or algorithm to determine the average for the respective country.

In the United States, and the state of North Carolina, there are weighted and unweighted grade point averages. Most ninth graders use a unweight scale on a 4.0 scale between 0 and 4, with 4 being the highest possible score for each class. Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses have higher-point scales to compensate for the complexity of the courses. The grades earned for Honors and AP courses are "weighted" in comparison to standard classes. Honors classes add half of a point to each score, ranging from 0 to 4.5 and AP classes span from 0 to 5.0 due to the addition of one point to the value of each standard letter grade (Potter 2017).

Instructional Implementation

===== Are your scholars privileged? =====

I was convinced that scholars lacked overall knowledge of what a GPA is, why it is important and where to find it. Understanding that this was a generalization, I decided to test this hypothesis. In summer 2019, I had the benefit of being on the planning committee for the new scholar orientation, comprised mostly of freshmen. As a blended learning school, the orientation was based on one of the modalities frequently used by teachers, station rotation. The scholars would arrive in the morning and navigate through stations that help them to become acclimated to high school life at iMeck. Every 30 minutes, scholar would rotate to one of the following stations.

Canvas - Informed scholars how to login and access Canvas courses.
Tour of Cochrane (walk whole school) - Since the school is a middle school and high school, scholars are shown what route to take to access all of the high school classes. It also includes common areas like the library, the cafeteria, the office, the gymnasium and elective classes.
Graduation Requirement - During this session, facilitator discuss the components that lead to a successful year like attendance policy, continuation requirements as well as graduation requirements.
Behavior/Academic Expectations - Scholars informed of the behavior expectation of attending iMeck, the continuation requirements needed to return next year, and the importance of integrity.
Email - Scholars taught where it is located and how to access it. Facilitators also focused on the frequency in which you should check it and how to link it to your phone.
Egg Challenge - All scholars need a laptop to be successful. They can either use their own laptop or use a laptop owned and managed by CMS. Prior to receiving the device, all scholars must participate in the "Eggcellent" Computer Care Project. If a device is damaged (hardware issues like broken screen, etc.) the scholar is responsible for any repair costs.

Though these topics are very important and very necessary, I proposed that we add two sessions to the rotation. In the proposal, I was able to lessen the transition times to allow more time per session and to add my proposed sessions to the existing sessions. The topics were added and the descriptions updated.

PowerSchool was added to Email - Scholars were advised on how to claim their account through my.ncedcloud.org or the CMS scholar portal. They also learned how to access most of the applications that they will need using this single Sign-On Website. This reduces the need for numerous usernames and passwords to remember.
GPA was added to Graduation Requirement - During this session, facilitators discuss the definition and importance of grade point average.

The 2019-2020 9th Grade Orientation is scheduled for August 19, 2019. For the first time, PowerSchool and GPA will be discussed with the scholars. Even though it was my proposal, to include GPA and PowerSchool, I was not the facilitator of either sessions. I instead walk from session to session just observing the reaction of the scholars. What I observed only proved my hypothesis. Scholars had absolutely no idea what a GPA was nor did they know how to access all the information that PowerSchool held. Teaching scholars about PowerSchool and grade point average is the easy part. Understanding why they have not accessed this information prior to these sessions is a little bit more challenging.

===== What's in PowerSchool? =====

During summer orientation, iMeck scholars learned how to use PowerSchool. Most importantly, due to my suggestion, scholars learned how to access their Course Schedule, Grades and Attendance. We also demonstrated that clicking on the grade redirects them to a detailed list of assignments for that class and their respective grade. Lastly, we emphasized the need for them to advocate for themselves. For example, if you disagree with a grade or if your attendance is incorrect, *politely* communicate your findings with your teacher, either in person or via email.

Lean In Circle In teaching scholars about PowerSchool, I will also have to tackle some tough socio-economic and social emotional awareness topics. The best way to do this is to have a weekly meeting. Lean in circle are a fantastic way to get scholars talking. The premise behind a lean in circle is to teach scholars how to support each other as they grow stronger in their acclimation to high school.

Scholars, like most others, are not going to be willing to share openly or support genuinely at first. I would introduce scholars to the idea of a lean in circle with an activity like Switch Sides IF…. In the game of Switch Sides IF…, each scholar moves their chair to form a circle around the room. I, the facilitator, stand in the middle of the circle and say something that I know scholars had in common. For example, I could say, "Switch Sides IF you have never attended Cochrane Middle School." If that is a true statement for any scholar, they must move to a different chair. If it is a false statement, remain in your seat. Since I did not attend Cochrane Middle School, I will take a seat. The last person standing becomes the new facilitator and must pose a "Switch Sides IF…" statement. The first time I will project some statements that scholars can select. Below are some samples statements adapted from Speakizi (2017).

Switch Sides IF…

- You prefer summer more than winter.
- You speak another language…Tell someone what languages you speak.
- You were born in (the state you live)…if you didn't switch sides tell someone where you were born.
- You have lived in another country (for more than 2 years)… tell someone where.
- You have a pet… if you switched sides tell someone what pet you have and it's name.
- You were named after someone…Explain who you were named after.
- You like to sing.
- You play an instrument…tell someone what instrument you play.
- You like to play sports or have played on any teams.
- You have an iPhone.

On a side note, you must ask that they limit their "Switch Sides If…" to school appropriate true/false statement. Just be sure to set a time limit and maybe some ground rules about sportsmanship, no pushing or shoving to get a chair. I have played this game with scholars and a similar game, Over the Mountain, at professional development sessions. In both instances, it was a lot of fun! The fact that the game is fun is a byproduct and not the main intention of the game. The game gets scholars accustom to sitting and facing each, which is an important part of process. Looking someone in the face, you can see the emotion of the conversation. Sitting in a circle evokes a trust and culture that allows conversations to flow.

Second Lean In Circle would begin at their desk. The goal is to teach scholars how view PowerSchool information with a different lens. Here is a script that walks scholars through the PowerSchool login, how to access their current grades, accumulative grades, as well as how to advocate for themselves.

- Login to PowerSchool via NCEdcloud.
- GRADES: Once in PowerSchool look at grades and by clicking on the grades in blue. Look at your assignments to ensure that your grades are recorded accurately. If you notice that it is not accurate, contact your respective teacher and inquire about the grade(s). Make sure to be respectful while having this conversation with your teacher. If you have grades that are below 60%, contact your teacher via email to see what can be done to improve. Only ask for ways to increase your grade if you are actually going to be the work and turn it in.
- ATTENDANCE: Look at your attendance.
    - Know that each class absence is recorded as an individual absence.
    - Confirm that the attendance is accurate, if not contact the respective teacher with an email. Be sure to include the date and proof that you were in fact in class for at least half of the time.
- GPA: As long as you have been in high school for one full semester, your grade point average, acronym GPA, is located at the bottom of the screen.

Once scholars have looked at their attendance and their grades, it is important to discuss the timeline with them. They may not be aware of how the quarters and semesters work in high school. Here is a question that you could pose for the second Lean In Circle. Who is your education for (who are your coming to school for)? Prior to having this conversation, you should establish some ground rules. It's better if scholars create their own rules, and the teacher asks as the facilitator. Some rules include:

Be Present simply refers to the fact that if you must be a willing participate in the activity.

- No technology in the circle
- No recording devices (computer or phone)
- When we lean in, we listen with our ears (not our mouths)
- Everyone participates
- Be engaged
- What happens here, stays here
- Be positive
- Learn something

Future Lean In Circles Conversation Starters

- Is the environment playing a role in privilege?
- Are you allowing your deficits to defeat you?
- You are given a number, many numbers, you are not a number. You are a person with the ability to control what the numbers say about you.

===== Does white privilege exist? =====

The Lean In Circles are to be used in conjunction with the lessons. Prior to discussing the all-important grade point average, it is important that scholars understand the history of standardized testing. The following articles provide insight into the reason grade point averages were created and are currently used in secondary and higher education.

Article 1: The Racist Beginnings of Standardized Testing from National Education Association

Reflection: Golden Line: This article is broken in to four sections, what is your golden line (most important sentence) in each section and why? Please make sure you defend your claim using at least 3 full sentences.

Article 2: Report: Higher Education Creates 'White Racial Privilege' from U.S.News & World Report

Reflection: Article 1-2-3: Write one reflection about how the article made you feel about your education; two things you can do to combat "white racial privilege," three things you learned from reading the article.

I selected these articles because they were both written in a scholar-friendly language. They also are detailed enough to grasp the information without leaving anyone feeling negative. The goal of the reading is to teach each scholar, regardless of their ethnicity, how the system works so that the can learn how to advocate for themselves. The goal is not to create a racial or socio-economic divide within them, the class or the school. After each article, scholars should be prepared to have a conversation about their reflections. As a facilitator, you have to keep the conversation positive.

===== What is Grade Point Average? =====

There are all sorts of resources on Teacher Pay Teacher that can be used to teach scholars about grade point averages. Here is a quick, 50-minute create by my assistant principle, Michelle Young, with my input and adaptations. *The GPA Worksheet lactated in Appendix 2.

Warm up I suggest you create a google form so that you can collect the data. You should also use guided notes for scholars to follow along. Ask scholars complete the GPA Pre-Assessment google form answering the following questions. It should take no longer than three (3) minutes.

1. What does GPA mean?
2. What does GPA show?
3. Why is GPA important?

What is GPA mean?

GPA is an acronym for grade point average.

What does GPA show?

Grade point average or GPA is very simply, the average of your grades. "Your GPA, or Grade Point Average, is a number that indicates how well or how high you scored in your courses on average" (Potter, 2017). It is a way of converting each of your letter grade into a numerical value. You have to find the mean of the grades. Grade point average, GPA, is just as it sounds. It is the average of your grades. It could be a class average, a semester, a term or a year. Regardless of the time frame, your grade point average is calculated by adding the number of grades together and dividing by the total number of grades in total.

Why is GPA important?

Colleges, universities, scholarship committees and employers all reference grade point average as criteria for admission or hiring purposes. A high GPA indicates hard work in school, which is a desirable quality for college or a job. A low GPA, is not looked at so highly because it can be interpreted as a lack of hard work. According to Potter, GPA fluctuates throughout your time to indicate overall improvement of grades, or, in some cases, how much how much work still needs to progress to me made (2017).

Utopia GPA

In a perfect world, with each scholar knowing their strengths and grow opportunities, have each scholar calculate their goal GPA.

1. Write down the name of each class currently enrolled in this semester or school year.

Name of Class	Grade	Points
TOTAL		

GPA _____

2. Each percent needs to be converted to a letter grade. Use to chart below to convert the percentage to the corresponding letter grade (A, B, C, D or F).

3. Finally, each letter grade needs to be a point value ranging from 0 to 4 for standard classes, and 0 to 4.5 for honors classes and 0 to 5 for Advanced Placement classes. Write it next to the respective blank given, next to the corresponding class and grades. Use the chart below as a reference.

Standard	Honors Level	Advanced Placement
A (90 - 100) = 4 pts B (80 - 89) = 3 pts C (70 - 79) = 2 pts D (60 - 69) = 1 pt F (below 60) = 0 pts	A (90 - 100) = 4.5 pts B (80 - 89) = 3.5 pts C (70 - 79) = 2.5 pts D (60 - 69) = 1.5 pt F (below 60) = 0 pts	A (90 - 100) = 5 pts B (80 - 89) = 4 pts C (70 - 79) = 3 pts D (60 - 69) = 2 pt F (below 60) = 0 pts

Your Utopia GPA

4. Calculate the total number of points for all of the classes (add them together).
5. Count the total number of classes currently enrolled in.
6. Divide the first number by the second number. That number is the current GPA.

Calculate GPA

1. Go to RapidIdentity
2. PowerSchool Student
3. Make sure Grades and Attendance are showing!
4. Use the tracker to document ALL of your classes and your grades as they are today. Only write down the name of the class and the corresponding letter grade. If you unsure, use the table below as a guide.

Name of Class	Grade	Points

5. Assign a point value ranging from 0 to 4 for standard classes, and 0 to 4.5 for honors classes and 0 to 5 for Advanced Placement classes. Write it next to the respective blank given, next to the corresponding class and grades.
6. Calculate the total number of points for all of the classes (add them together).
7. Count the total number of classes currently enrolled in.
8. Divide the first number by the second number. That number is the current GPA.

Reflection
Scholars should be given an opportunity to bring their GPA to life through reflection. Give them five (5) minutes to answer the next two questions silently and independently. Be sure that they justify their answers.

1. Do you think this is a high or low GPA? Justify your answer.
2. What letter grade is associated with your GPA? What does it say about your work ethic? Justify your answer.
3. How does your current GPA compared to your Utopic GPA? How does that make you feel? Justify your answer.
4. What are your next steps? How will you hold yourself accountable?

College and Career Ready
To further put their respective GPA into perspective, each scholar should read and annotate the following College GPA Requirements: What Do You Need to Get In? Upon completion, each scholar should answer the last questions.

1. If your current GPA was your GPA as a Junior, would you be able to get into one of the 16 schools in the University of NC system?
2. What can you do if you don't meet the GPA requirements?
3. What is the lowest GPA you can get away with if you want a solid chance of getting into a four-year college?

===== How is GPA a predictor? =====

Grade Point Average -- Middle & High School - 21st Century Math Project, by Clark Creative Math, is a project that I found on Teachers Pay Teachers. It takes the understanding of grade point average and uses that understanding as a predictor of what grades are needed to meet goals. It allows scholars to manipulate percentages to determine the impact on the overall grade point average. Scholars will be responsible for reviewing a transcript to determine the difference between the academic GPA and the one that appears on the transcript all in an effort to perform a case study of four characters.

The calculation of the data is in line with several high school standards. It requires that scholar to calculate the grade point average, which is the same thing as the arithmetic mean. To calculate the mean simply add the numbers in the data set together and divide by the total number of items in the data set. Parts of the activity also requires the comparison of data as well as calculating the difference. The GPA Project provides real world application of how to find the missing data of linear equations. Scholars are provided the grade point average and some grades and will be asked to determine the last grade needed to achieve the desired grade point average. Lastly, scholars are given an opportunity to visualize the consequences of not calculating your grade point average.

The activity provides experiences and require scholars to determine the best and worst case scenarios. As an extension activity, scholars could use the grade point averages to create a scatter plot then calculate and draw a line of best fit.

===== How does my grade point average impact the college admission process? ====

The GPA Game was developed by Mary Lee Hoganson, a Counselor from Homewood-Flossmoor High School in Illinois. The GPA Game demonstrates the selection process that colleges and universities use to determine admission and scholarships. It focuses on college admission from the perspective of the whole scholar. Consideration is not only given to a scholars' grade point average, the game also analyzes the extracurricular activities and the after school activities, or lack thereof, as a factor in the college admission process.

In the GPA game, nine scholar volunteers (candidates) are lined up facing the class and holding a large card. Printed on one side of the card is the GPA, in large print, and specific personal qualities or activities printed on it for each GPA. The audience of scholars are never to see the GPA side of the card, only the blank side. The scholar audience are acting as the college admission panel. Their job is to observe as candidates go through the office admission and to discuss what constitutes a good candidate for admission.

To start, candidates organize themselves in ascending order from largest GPA to the smallest. The facilitator should double check the order to ensure that it is done correctly and with fidelity. The panel will begin by hypothesizing about the order. Typically, you will hear positive discourse surrounding the higher GPAs and negative discourse about the lower GPAs.

To play, the facilitator reads the scenarios. During the reading, the candidates are reading their respective cards to determine if the personal quality or activity pertains to them. If it does, the candidate has to respond as indicated by the facilitator (i.e. if …take one-step forward). If not, the scholar will remain in line only shifting as needed to accommodate movement.
As in the real application process, it is common practice for activities or personal qualities to apply to more than one person. If this happens, the candidate with the higher GPA shifts first.

Once the facilitator has read all of the personal qualifications cards and all of the shifts have been made, than and only then, the candidates reveal their GPA. The panel is then asked to discuss the correlation between grade point average and personal qualifications. The expectation is that the scholars realize that grade point average is not the only determinant in the admission process. It provides the visual needed to emphasize the importance of being well rounded.

Reading the article, The GPA Game, by Joleigh Underwood, will help scholars solidify their understanding of the GPA game. As always, scholars should annotate the article prior to writing about the correlation between the GPA Game and the article. As high school related extension activity, scholars could create a table of the absolute value of the movement of each of the nine scholars and their respective GPA. They could use TI84 graphing calculator or Desmos online graphing calculator to create a scatter plot find the line of best fit. There are many other activities, including The Great Sorting Game found in the Early High School Curriculum (Hoganson et.al, p. 47).

====== How can I share what learned? ======

It is growing increasingly important to focus on the whole scholar. As educator, we are charged with teaching content but also responsible for the well-being of social emotional heath of our scholars. One way to boost confidence, while focusing on teaching content is to celebrate the positive accomplishments of our scholars. I have worked with the administration at my school to do just that. Something as simple as posting the names of those who made the honor roll is a confidence booster. This is our first quarter posting them. It is our hope that others would pay more attention to their academics as a way to be publically celebrated second quarter.

First quarter, high school freshmen had the most scholars who made the honor roll. There were countless others who were impacted by the fact that they narrowly missed the honor roll and is striving to make it second quarter. I can only hope that my focus on grade point average with this group of scholars played a major roll and I celebrate this as a major success.

Scholars will also have an opportunity to celebrate their newfound level of understanding. As an end of grade project, high school scholars will be responsible for teaching middle school scholar about grade point average. The will have to create a lesson plan for how to teach the same lesson that was taught to them. Within their lesson plan, they will have to create one extension activity to ensure that the middle school scholar not only understand the importance GPA can demonstrate how to track it.

Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards

NC.M1.A-SSE.1 Interpret expressions that represent a quantity in terms of its context.

NC.M1.A-SSE.1a Identify and interpret parts of a linear, exponential, or quadratic expression, including terms, factors, coefficients, and exponents.

NC.M1.A-CED.1 Create equations and inequalities in one variable and use them to solve problems.

NC.M1.S-ID.1 Use technology to represent data with plots on the real number line (histograms and box plots).

NC.M1.S-ID.2 Use statistics appropriate to the shape of the data distribution to compare center (median, mean) and spread (interquartile range, standard deviation) of two or more different data sets. Interpret differences in shape, center, and spread in the context of the data sets.

NC.M1.S-ID.3 Examine the effects of extreme data points (outliers) on shape, center, and/or spread.

NC.M1.S-ID.6 Represent data on two quantitative variables on a scatter plot, and describe how the variables are related.

NC.M1.S-ID.6a. Fit a least squares regression line to linear data using technology. Use the fitted function to solve problems.

NC.M1.S-ID.8 Compute (using technology) and interpret the correlation coefficient of a linear fit.

Appendix 2

Calculating GPA Worksheet

1. What does GPA stand for? _____ _____ _____
2. What does GPA show? _____

   _____
3. Why is a GPA important? _____

   _____

   _____

Utopia GPA
In a perfect world, with each scholar knowing their strengths and grow opportunities, have each scholar calculate their goal GPA.

4. Write down the name of each class currently enrolled in this semester or school year.

Name of Class	Grade	Points
TOTAL		

GPA _____

5. Each percent needs to be converted to a letter grade. Use to chart below to convert the percentage to the corresponding letter grade (A, B, C, D or F).

6. Finally, each letter grade needs to be a point value ranging from 0 to 4 for standard classes, and 0 to 4.5 for honors classes and 0 to 5 for Advanced Placement classes. Write it next to the respective blank given, next to the corresponding class and grades. Use the chart below as a reference.

Standard	Honors Level	Advanced Placement
A (90 - 100) = 4 pts B (80 - 89) = 3 pts C (70 - 79) = 2 pts D (60 - 69) = 1 pt F (below 60) = 0 pts	A (90 - 100) = 4.5 pts B (80 - 89) = 3.5 pts C (70 - 79) = 2.5 pts D (60 - 69) = 1.5 pt F (below 60) = 0 pts	A (90 - 100) = 5 pts B (80 - 89) = 4 pts C (70 - 79) = 3 pts D (60 - 69) = 2 pt F (below 60) = 0 pts

Your Utopia GPA

7. Calculate the total number of points for all of the classes (add them together).
   Count the total number of classes currently enrolled in.
   Divide the first number by the second number. That number is the current GPA.

Calculate GPA

Go to RapidIdentity
PowerSchool Student
Make sure Grades and Attendance are showing!

8. Use the tracker to document ALL of your classes and your grades as they are today. Only write down the name of the class and the corresponding letter grade. If you unsure, use the table below as a guide.

Name of Class	Grade	Points

9. Assign a point value ranging from 0 to 4 for standard classes, and 0 to 4.5 for honors classes and 0 to 5 for Advanced Placement classes. Write it next to the respective blank given, next to the corresponding class and grades.

10. Calculate the total number of points for all of the classes (add them together).
    Count the total number of classes currently enrolled in.
    Divide the first number by the second number. That number is the current GPA.

Reflection

You have an opportunity to bring your GPA to life through reflection. You have (5) minutes to answer the next set of questions silently and independently. Be sure to justify your answers.

11. Do you think this is a high or low GPA? Justify your answer.

12. What letter grade is associated with your GPA? What does your GPA say about your work ethic? Justify your answer.

13. How does this GPA compare to your Utopia GPA? How does that make you feel? Justify your answer.

14. What are your next steps? How will you hold yourself accountable?

College and Career Ready

To further put their respective GPA into perspective please read and annotate the article, College GPA Requirements: What Do You Need to Get In? Upon completion, each scholar should answer the last questions.

15. If your current GPA was your GPA as a Junior, would you be able to get into one of the 16 schools in the University of NC system?

16. What can you do if you don't meet the GPA requirements?

17. What is the lowest GPA you can get away with if you want a solid chance of getting into a four-year college?

Student Resources

- **Pencil**
- **Paper**
- **Computer**
- **Desmos Online Graphing Calculator**
- **TI-84 Graphing Calculator**
- **Positive Attitude**
- **Reading List:**

The Racist Beginnings of Standardized Testing provides the history of standardized testing from inception to modern day. http://www.nea.org/home/73288.htm

Report: Higher Education Creates 'White Racial Privilege' discusses the notion that white scholars attend elite, well-funded colleges and universities at a higher rate scholars of color. https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/07/31/report-higher-education-creates-white-racial-privilege

College GPA Requirements: What Do You Need to Get In? gives scholars an opportunity to determine what college or university they will qualify for based on their current grade point average. https://blog.prepscholar.com/college-gpa-requirements?utm_source=email&utm_medium=share&utm_campaign=btn

The GPA Game is an article that explains that GPA is not the only indicator for college and university admission. https://bhsthebridge.com/2136/opinion/the-gpa-game/

Teacher Resources

Grade Point Average -- Middle & High School - 21st Century Math Project is a project based learning activity located on the Teachers Pay Teachers website. There are three standard aligned activities that help scholars practice calculating GPA, determine the GPA needed to meet their goal, understand how use GPA to predict the grade needed to meet the goal and to review transcripts to determine the trajectory of a graduating seniors.
https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Grade-Point-Average-Middle-High-School-21st-Century-Math-Project-392754

National Association for College Admission Counseling. Step by Step College Awareness and Planning: Early High School Curriculum. is the location of the The Great Sorting Game. Formerly known as The GPA Game, The Great Sorting Games provides step by step directions of how to facilitate the game. The game provides the visual needed to understand that GPA is not the only indicator used for admission purposes.
https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/advocacy-and-ethics/initiatives/steps/2017earlyhsstepbystep.pdf

Calculating GPA Worksheet can be printed so that scholars can calculate their GPA and reflect on its meaning.

The Power of PowerSchool: Privilege Lies Curriculum Unit Goals at the beginning of the curriculum unit is a handy resource as it outlines, in detail, the goals and expectations of the unit.

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