



# LIVE YOUR LEGACY Leadership Summit

WHITE PAPER

## WHY THE LIVE YOUR LEGACY SUMMIT?

College readiness is commonly understood as the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed in a college program (certificate, associate's degree, or baccalaureate) without requiring remediation.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, over 3.9 million undergraduates with federal student loan debt dropped out during fiscal years 2015 and 2016.<sup>2</sup> Many researchers and educators are working to determine the reasons why dropping out of college is happening at such a high rate. What we do know, especially from our research here at i.b.mee., is that the time from 10th grade to entering college is filled with high levels of stress and overwhelm for students because of their fears of not making good grades. They have cultivated a belief that making "A's" is the only way to get into a good college, land a good job and be successful in the world. The education system has intentionally passed along this belief from the early 1980's with the *Nation at Risk* Report by the U.S. federal government that emphasized that our country improve its test scores to compete with other nations. As a result, the U.S. high school standardized curriculum changed to give students even more hours of class time sitting in class learning math, english, history and science, preparing for standardized testing, and continuing to pass on the belief that this is the WAY to handle the rigor of college and be successful in life.

However, taking rigorous high school college prep courses and making A's has not been shown to always translate to success in college and life afterwards.<sup>3</sup> Students who are more well rounded and balanced, and do not put all their time into becoming a professional "A-Student" and spend time experiencing the real world learning life skills, and connecting to their passions, are showing up to be more resilient and feel more successful in college and life. How many times have you heard of the valedictorian killing him/herself, becoming violent, or dropping out of college after their first year. It happens more than you think. <sup>12-13</sup>

There are also other reasons for students dropping out of college. <sup>1, 2, 4, 5, 8</sup>

- having to take a remedial class as a freshman in college
- difficulty balancing school, work, and family
- lack of parental assistance in paying tuition
- learning opportunities outside of high school
- parents who did not attend college
- limited cultural supports and community resources
- lack of peer supports
- racism
- limited networking opportunities with people who have succeeded in college
- ineffective or lack of counseling in high school

These are all valid and reliable reasons that young people drop out of college (and even high school). We believe that what is foundational through just about all of the reasons is the lack of personal **wellness, empowerment and leadership** development (developing their emotional, psychological, intellectual, social, physical and spiritual dimensions of their life). Developing these three main pillars within young people supports them in believing in themselves and that they are “good enough and worthy of their dreams and goals no matter where they come from. It allows them to connect to who they are and what they love and why, and develops their confidence to bring their authentic selves out into the world experiencing their passions and finding meaning in their lives. When we create healthy and empowering learning environments that integrate these 3 pillars, the compassion and understanding of each young person will come first, so that they learn to connect to themselves, each other and the world around them. This results in natural, intrinsically motivated actions, where they live their own **legacy** in the present moment and beyond.

When environments do not emphasize these three pillars and fail to integrate their concepts and principles into the day to day life of our young people, students may, for example, choose a major that they don’t like just because it is the “right normal thing to do” or their parents told them to take that route because they will make lots of money. Or if students don’t make A’s or are not given the same privileges or experiences as everyone else, it would be normal for them not to believe in themselves or not have the internal resiliency to keep moving forward. College

students end up quitting or graduating feeling majorly stressed because they still don't have clarity about what to do with their lives and they have a lot of debt.

David Conley in his book *Standards for Success, Understanding University Success*, emphasizes that our college freshmen are in dire need of developing intelligent behaviors that would help them be better problem solvers, critical thinkers, have an inquisitive nature, a willingness to accept critical feedback, an openness to possible failure, and the ability to cope with frustrating and ambiguous learning tasks.<sup>6</sup> So giving high school students time to learn these skills along with vital study and organizational skills to navigate the education system and world is crucial. In addition, high school students should learn to authentically speak and write based in sound empowerment and leadership research, instead of believing that there is only one cookie cutter way to communicate. Also, learning self-care practices would be an integral part of everyday life as a part of this new-paradigm of learning and living, as well as giving students the time and space to understand and vent feelings appropriately in order to gain emotional intelligence, and working on social skills to communicate clearly and be able to move through conflicts with friends, parents, siblings, acquaintances and significant others. It is also important that students get to experience forming their own learning communities in which small groups of students learn to get comfortable with each other, or take a class or work together to engage in critical thinking with diverse viewpoints, ..and that you have peer support to get through difficult moments, ...and have plenty of time for reflection and identifying learning outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

We have found, when students are prepared with these skills as the foundational "big rocks" in their education (rather than more and more english), the more they will be ready for any type of environment, because they will "love themselves" more, and have the confidence not to take things personally, while learning to take more and more self-responsibility to plan their own lives and handle challenges. If these things are learned in high school, they will pave the way for feeling successful in college, career and life.

In a major research study, an entire school of students were given total freedom to learn and grow from their own passions from elementary through high school with master teachers in all areas available for discussions and skill development when called

upon. Most of the time the students were learning from each other, and learning social and emotional skills naturally. Their intrinsic motivation to learn was extremely high with little to no extrinsic rewards (no grading or punishment). They had a democratic system of government lead by the older students when things went wrong (like hitting or destroying property). They functioned on agreed upon values and the strength of their character. Many years later when these students were in their professions, they found that they were just as successful as their main stream students; they became doctors, lawyers, teachers, plumbers in the same numbers as the “conventional students”. However, they believed that they experienced less stress and more resilience over all in their lives stating that they felt like they could make decisions and handle anything life brought them.<sup>9</sup>

With the changing face of K-12 education, budget cuts are affecting the ability for many high schools to provide students the counseling to gain some emotional skills they need to successfully transition from high school to college. Faced with constant budget cuts and lack of support, many counselors are overwhelmed and cannot serve their student population as they once did and mostly just do paperwork for college entrance applications. For example, in 2008 the California Department of Education reported a high school counselor-to-student ratio that exceeds 1:482.<sup>4</sup> Bringing certified life coaches into the schools would make a huge impact on developing the life skills of students. At i.b.mee., we have been researching the effects of life coaching on high school students success and finding that when students get coaching, they start shifting very quickly into wellness, empowerment and leadership ways of being very quickly. Life Coaches are specifically trained in how to hold space for individuals to move towards personal empowerment and would give school counselors the time to work on the college transition paper trail that they so desperately need.

The biggest thing we hear high school students wanting the most of ...is more freedom. They tell us that they are so beat down by being told what to do and controlled in many aspects of their lives. The more we don't trust our teens, the more they show up in ways not to be trusted (self-fulfilling prophecy), because they don't want to be honest and real with adults. Students are so afraid of making wrong decisions or producing work that is not “perfect enough” that it shuts down their creativity and freezes them into procrastination. They are more sensitive to mistakes so

they learn to do the paper, assignment, or skill exactly the way the teacher wants it so they get the “A”, not because the “thing” they are learning really works or that they really want to learn the material. Jeff Arnett found that high school students seem to feel that “accepting responsibility for one’s self and making independent decisions” is what will finally make them feel grown up. <sup>11</sup> Adults need to support our high school students in learning to trust their decisions. It is vital they learn to move through challenges and have the trust, patience, courage and determination to not give up on their meaningful, intrinsic goals.

(Disclaimer: Here at i.b.mee., we love our public schools and their teachers, principals and students. We by no means feel negatively towards them or what they are doing. These people are our heroes in an educational system that is not totally set up for them to truly thrive and our mission is to support this change.)

## The Solution

Over the past 30 years, the wellness, empowerment and leadership evidence-based research has been readily applied in fields like athletics and business, but has had a really tough time making its way into education and parenting. These systems are now archaic and in dire need of shifting.

i.b.mee.’s mission is to set a new standard and bring to life an healthy and empowering education system, and parents are a part of this system also. It is critical to provide these skills as much as possible outside of the school until the education system catches up with what we already know and changes how they define success, health and happiness. This is why we developed as one of our main programs at i.b.mee., the [Live Your Legacy Leadership Summit](#) for high school girls.

The Summit provides “high impact” wellness, empowerment and leadership experiences over a week during the summer at the beautiful Western Carolina University campus in Cullowhee NC. This experience includes 2 group video conference coaching sessions before and after the week for the students and 2 group video conference coaching sessions for the parents (one before and one afterwards). The Summit experiences support the girls in gaining the freedom, confidence and

skills to live their highest and healthiest visions for themselves, their relationships, their community and their world, moving them forward with having the best chance of reaching their full potential, physically, emotionally, socially, psychologically, intellectually and spiritually in school, career and life.

The camp director is [Meg Hanshaw PhD](#) who has been researching and providing wellness, empowerment and leadership programs for individuals for 30 years. These programs are based in theories and concepts that are the foundation of what makes young people thrive in school, career and life.

High school girls from all backgrounds are invited to learn skills in the 3 Pillars of WELLNESS, EMPowerment and LEADERSHIP, and we have added a 4<sup>th</sup> pillar called LEGACY. This pillar includes all the research and experiences that allows a student to know, trust, believe in, love and be themselves. Certified life and wellness coaches support the girls during the Summit week at a 1 coach per 4 girls ratio. They take part in experiences that build the concepts and skills that they are not getting in school. The main goal is to allow the girls to experience themselves while being accepted “as is” to set them up to feel safe enough to begin to explore who they are and what they want and GO FOR IT! We provide scholarships so any girl can attend who is ready.

Below are some other goals of The LYL Leadership Summit that correspond with the challenges that we discussed in the beginning of this paper.

- We don't do anything standardized (accept for a few guidelines we have to have for safety). Girls get to use what fits or doesn't fit and express what is working and not working to begin to learn how to make their own decisions. (...because they are brilliant.)
- We teach the skill of vision mapping and time management which is huge and takes some serious time over the week.
- We work on shifting their belief systems from disempowering to empowering beliefs so they learn what it really means to be resilient and empowered. This includes redefining success, happiness and health in order to know your are successful.

- They experience that where they are at their own level is perfect. They don't need to be at a higher level right now. They will get there. We will meet the girls right where they are and they will understand that they have just as much “right” to be just as successful as someone who is at a higher level.
- They will get to feel how to balance school, work and play. This is healthy.
- The girls will get away from the camp and experience nature.
- patient, amazing even if they did not go to college and that they are still amazing and we all can get along even if they have different beliefs than others.
- They learn how to find resources. They will learn to ASK!
- The girls will practice setting up their own peer supports so that they continue after the week.
- They will learn to discuss the reality of racism, sexism and other injustices of today's society in a mature, respectful way.
- They will learn from and talk to local women business leaders and college students.
- They will learn a powerful communication skill called WAVE Communication so they can be clear on their own boundaries and still stay connected to their relationships with peers, significant others and their parents improving their social intelligence.
- The girls will learn to speak in front of others from their heart. This means they will improve their emotional intelligence.
- The environment the girls are in will allow for trust and freedom. They will take part in world cafes to express opinions that are not judged.

We find that the girls who attend the week go home more able to express who they are as they continue to move towards being able to share themselves and what they believe and think more authentically. They will be more confident about their path to college, career and beyond and how to navigate “the systems”. Our research at i.b.mee., implementing these 4 Pillars (which we call The W.E.L.L. Kids NOW® System) in a local high school (and in local elementary schools) in Asheville is showing that the things outlined in this paper are beginning to happen. We believe as the education system picks up on and applies the research on what it takes to support students to

thrive, our young person epidemics of suicide, bullying, chronic disease and dropping out of school will subside.

Let's get them what they need by supporting the Live Your Legacy Leadership Summit in whatever way you can and continue to form a model for implementing in the schools.

Thank you in advance for reading this and having an interest in the future of our world!



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**Setting a new standard and bringing to life a healthy and empowering educational system, so all students are W.E.L.L.**

## RESOURCES

<sup>1</sup> <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1015237.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://hechingerreport.org/federal-data-shows-3-9-million-students-dropped-college-debt-2015-2016/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.inc.com/ilya-pozin/why-many-students-with-bad-grades-end-up-successful.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.straighterline.com/blog/college-dropout-statistics-part-time-students-suffer-the-most/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/08/14/the-troubling-student-to-counselor-ratio-that-doesnt-add.html>

<sup>6</sup> David Conley, Standards for Success, Understanding University Success (Eugene, Ore.: Center for Educational Policy Research, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=hs\\_writing\\_2013](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=hs_writing_2013)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2018/06/08/why-do-so-many-students-drop-out-of-college-and-what-can-be-done-about-it/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.2625c0b2d160](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2018/06/08/why-do-so-many-students-drop-out-of-college-and-what-can-be-done-about-it/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.2625c0b2d160)

<sup>9</sup> Gray, Peter (2013). Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life. <http://www.freetolearnbook.com/>  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/freedom-learn>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10842426>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.jeffreyarnett.com/ARNETT\\_Emerging\\_Adulthood\\_theory.pdf](http://www.jeffreyarnett.com/ARNETT_Emerging_Adulthood_theory.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2018/02/12/suicide-note-16-year-old-renews-debate-about-pressure-top-high-schools>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2194711/High-school-valedictorian-18-jumps-14-stories-death-Columbia-University-dorm-just-days-moving-in.html>

For more references, please contact us. <http://ibmee.org/contact/>