

CONTRA COSTA TIMES
EDITORIAL

College for C students

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ALTHOUGH EDUCATION HAS more than its share of vagaries, one thing experience tells us is that leaders don't always come from the A students.

That is why six students from Leadership Public School in Richmond recently attended a program at University of the Pacific called College Summit Workshop and seven more attended a similar workshop at UC Berkeley.

College Summit, a nonprofit group, sponsors four-day workshops nationwide designed to preach the message of college to economically disadvantaged students who have potential but carry only a C average.

The group provides one-on-one sessions with college counselors, financial aid information, pointers and practice for filling out application, and other college information that often misses low-income students and others who are not focused on higher education.

Often these children are not considering college because they aren't the 4.0 students, they don't have the money, it is not in their family history or vision, and it just doesn't seem feasible.

But, College Summit recognizes that many people without high grade-point averages and without money still have the potential, skills and drive to make great careers for themselves and to be leaders in society.

It is a worthy endeavor. Too many people -- including some college recruiters -- seem to forget that many careers that require a college education also require skill sets not related to getting the highest grades, related to abilities and talents that are seldom graded -- at least not after kindergarten.

The importance of social intelligence -- plays well with others -- and emotional intelligence too often are downplayed or ignored. Once a degree is earned and a job's skill sets are learned, these other factors become key to how well the job is actually performed.

We are encouraged to know other Bay Area school districts are working with College Summit. But more could be done. Surely, there are more students who will benefit from this kind of encouragement.

They may not all be able to attend a college retreat at University of the Pacific, but schools and school districts must get the message to the people who don't already know that college is an option for them.

Straight-A students already have this figured out. It's the C students who need the message, the instruction and the extra encouragement. They must be told that with some hard work they too can earn the right to dream.