

Further investigation of the factors associated with low achievement reveals different information. African-American students are excellent problem solvers, as well as being articulate, curious, and motivated. However, they do not have the same academic success rate as their Caucasian counterparts. African-American students' low achievement in school can be attributed to inappropriate teaching strategies. Some examples of these inappropriate teaching styles are: a reliance on reading as the sole source of information; an emphasis on formal writing skills to the exclusion of other ways of demonstrating knowledge such as skits, models, or art work; and the prevalent use of a Eurocentric curriculum (Teel, et al. 1998).

Barriers to academic attainment have also been related to expectations of teachers. Teachers who have lowered expectations for students influence the degree to which those students are prepared for college. For example, African-American students are discouraged from enrolling in advanced high school classes (Mathews, 1998). Fewer African-American high school students are enrolled in the college preparatory high school curriculum and that impedes their preparation for college (Henriksen & Soule, 1995). These expectations held by teachers will have an impact on the college student's preparation.

The level of college preparedness in relation to gender was investigated in this study. However, the literature on effective teaching strategies and the role the high school teacher plays in preparing the high school student for college does not differentiate between male and female students. Research on classroom environment has not examined gender differences either.

High school teachers are one constituency that influences the preparedness of students for college. Other groups also play a role. For example, high school guidance counselors influence college-bound students.

### The Role of High School Guidance Counselors

High school guidance and counseling programs are designed to assist students in making informed decisions about their future educational and career choices. Developmental strategies employed by high school guidance counselors provide assistance to students in analyzing their self-knowledge, educational aspirations and career objectives (Feller, 1994).

Career guidance is a major issue among American students. Traditionally, high school guidance counselors have assisted students in the selection of classes and have helped students plan a sequence of academic courses that will prepare them for employment or post secondary education. The guidance counselor's role goes beyond assisting the student in the selection of classes and directing the student to college application and financial aid forms. School guidance counselors play a role in preparing students for their post high school endeavors. Guidance counselors can help students match their post secondary plans with the high school curriculum. By directing the student into career choices, the guidance counselor can assist students in the selection of the level and types of classes the student should take. The number and level of mathematics or science classes a high school student takes is directly related to the field of study they want to pursue in college. The guidance counselor is the connection between the curriculum and the student (Feller, 1994; Stringfield, 1997).

While academic skills are needed to succeed in college, research suggests that students also need non-academic skills. These skills include learning to learn, the effective use of verbal and nonverbal skills, adaptability, personal time management, personal/career development and group effectiveness (Feller, 1994).

Guidance counselors possess skills that can assist students in preparing them for their personal, career and social goals (Feller, 1994; Stringfield, 1997). High school guidance counselors play an essential role in the development of non-academic skills like goal setting, personal/career development, group effectiveness and leadership (Feller, 1994). These are essential skills needed for students to attain their future dreams.

Studies suggest that guidance counselors can enhance students' opportunity to make informed decisions about their post secondary plans. Guidance counselors can help students acquire knowledge, discover their interests, learn how to make choices, and see the connection between high school and college (Feller, 1994; Stringfield, 1997).

Unfortunately, most guidance counselors' time is relegated to helping students secure college application forms and answering college financial aid questions (Herbert, 1996). High school guidance counseling programs that are designed to provide a minimum of counseling duties as compared to administrative responsibilities inhibit the guidance counselor the opportunity to become an effective and integral part of students' educational development. Given sufficient time, counselors can help students to focus on content areas, assist them in planning an effective program, and promote growth through personal and educational challenges (Feller, 1994).

With a higher percentage of African-American students than White students needing college remedial courses, high school preparation activities for this population are essential. Monahan's (1993) study of African-American students revealed that pre-collegiate program participation increases the number of students applying to colleges. The high school guidance counselor plays an important role in increasing the awareness of postsecondary options for African-American students.

Research that investigated the role of the high school guidance counselor on students' preparation for college looked at implications for both the males and females population. Comprehensive counseling and guidance programs are designed to provide all students with life competencies (Feller, 1994).

The role of the guidance counselor is not limited to guiding and advising high school students. The high school guidance counselor can also assist students by advising their parents in areas that are critical to college preparation.