

The To&Through Project Student Stories Practitioner Learning Experience

CONTEXT

This practitioner learning experience is meant for practitioners doing postsecondary access and completion work—counselors, Postsecondary Leadership Teams, administrators, nonprofits and community-based organizations. While we most often explore students' direct pathways to 4-year or 2-year universities, we know [postsecondary pathways are often more complex](#). Our hope is that these stories allow you to explore pathways that are not as frequently publicly discussed and build upon your understanding of the motivations, opportunities, and challenges facing CPS students along their postsecondary journeys. These stories are not meant to be a representation of all pathways taken by CPS students or a message about which pathways students should or should not take.

FACILITATION & PLANNING NOTES

Learning Goal: Educators and practitioners will engage in a discussion of CPS alumni student stories and make connections to their context and postsecondary work in order to ground more deeply in student experiences.

This learning experience is designed as a 45 minute group activity and discussion.

- Ideally, there would be more time to delve into discussion. If you have more time, expand the time to discuss, particularly the whole group discussion.
- If you need to shorten the plan, consider providing the Student Stories as pre-work or skipping the jigsaw and doing just one Student Story that the whole group reads and discusses.

This learning experience asks participants to engage in jigsaw discussion of 3 different Student Stories. Choose the 3 Student Stories that seem like they will best resonate with your team. Here are 3 recommended stories to start with, but please check out the [full list of Student Stories](#) to choose those that feel most relevant to your team.



Sean is a Black college student who went to high school in Bronzeville. He immediately enrolled in a public university in Illinois and is now transferring to a community college in Chicago to develop his trade skills. [Read his story here.](#)

Mitzi is a Mexican-American, first-generation college student who grew up in Gage Park. She immediately enrolled in a private university in Chicago, took time off, and transferred to a community college to complete an associate degree. Currently, she is seeking to transfer to a private college in Chicago. [Read her story here.](#)



Kristian is a Black college student from Woodlawn who immediately enrolled in a private university in Ohio. She took a semester off and transferred to an HBCU in Washington D.C., before transferring to a private college in Washington. [Read her story here.](#)

This is just a sample of 3 stories. See [more student stories here](#) and choose the stories that feel most relevant to your context.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Topic & Approximate Timing	Learning Activity & Content
<p>Framing</p> <p>5 mins</p>	<p><i>Talking points for facilitator:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We spend so much time examining quantitative data and metrics (Freshmen On Track, application numbers, acceptances, enrollment, etc.), but we also know that qualitative data is just as important. • Student stories help us to humanize the data and learn from the lived experiences of young people. These student stories are real recent CPS alumni and help us understand the changes in the current landscape. • Research has shown that immediate enrollment in a 4-year institution is still the most likely pathway to attaining a college degree for CPS students, but we also know there are so many pathways students take and it is important for us as practitioners to learn from these varied pathways. • We'll be looking at some stories today that highlight real CPS alumni and the postsecondary paths they have taken with the goal of reflecting on how we can improve both our individual and systemic practices to support our students.

Learning Experience continues on the next page

Topic & Approximate Timing	Learning Activity & Content
<p>Jigsaw reading</p> <p>5-6 mins</p>	<p>Divide up into 3 groups (or, if your group is larger, 6 groups and have 2 groups read the same student story). Give each group one of the student stories.</p> <p>Read the student story (independently or aloud, your group can choose). As you read, highlight or make note of sentences or phrases that stand out to you. Be prepared to share one sentence or phrase with your group.</p>
<p>Small Group Discussion</p> <p>15 mins</p>	<p>Introduce/re-introduce yourself to the group and share one sentence or phrase that stands out to you from the student story.</p> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what ways is this student's experience similar to or different from the experiences of the students you have worked with? 2. If you could go back in time to a key coaching or advising session with this student, what would you hope to communicate/hope the student would know or feel? 3. Imagine you have 15+ students in similar situations that your team is working with. What systems and structures do you have in place/could you put in place to support these students? 4. Zoom in on the student's "what worked" and "hopes for the field" sections. What do you think your team is doing well to support students like this one? What could you do differently or better? <p>Make sure to choose someone from your group to share with the whole group.</p>
<p>Whole group discussion</p> <p>15 mins</p>	<p>Each small group should share a 1-2 minute summary of the student story they looked at and what it is making them think about their work.</p> <p>After each group shares, engage in a collective discussion as a whole group:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What systems and structures do you have in place/could you put in place to support similar students? 2. What actions or next steps is this making us want to take as a team? 3. These are just a few students' stories. How can you/the teams you support learn more of the stories of the students and alumni at your specific schools/organizations?
<p>Closing</p> <p>3 mins</p>	<p>Let's do a final whip around and share either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 word or phrase that's sticking with you from this discussion <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 action you personally hope to take personally as you leave this time today