

DOINGWHATWORKS



Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Inspiring Students to Attend College

May 2010

Topic: Helping Students Navigate the Path to College
Practice: Foster College Aspirations

Highlights

- High schools help fulfill students' college aspirations by developing mentoring programs, facilitating events with peers who are planning to attend college, and providing opportunities for students to explore careers.
- Mentors can help students by sharing personal experiences, assisting with the college application process, and just listening to students about their concerns.
- Schools can provide extracurricular activities and college access programs to facilitate events with peers that plan to go to college.
- High schools can provide career exploration activities to help students identify career interests and then provide opportunities that expand on those interests.

Full Transcript

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to the overview on Inspiring Students to Attend College.

Slide 2: Protecting the dream

While many students dream of going to college, without regular contact with college-educated adults outside of school, those dreams can fade as students begin to view college as an unattainable goal. This danger is especially great for low-income students or those from families with no college graduates.

High schools can help by:

- Developing mentoring programs,
- Facilitating events with peers who are planning to attend college, and
- Providing opportunities for students to explore careers.

Slide 3: Local mentors

Low-income and first-generation college-going students need role models that they can relate to. Volunteer mentors who share the same background as students, such as high school alumni, local college students, or professionals from the local community, can help students see college as a real option for them. Even high school seniors who are going through the college application process can work with younger students. Such mentors are far more likely to understand the types of challenges the students face every day, both academically and personally.

Slide 4: Mentoring roles

Mentors can help students in a number of ways, such as:

- Sharing their personal experiences in preparing for and attending college, and deciding on a career path;
- Working through the college application process with students, including introductory essays and financial aid forms;
- Reviewing students' report cards, discussing homework, and advocating for students who need tutoring; and
- Listening to the student, discussing his or her concerns, and offering advice as needed.

This kind of relationship requires regular communication. Mentors should communicate with freshman and sophomores at least monthly, and they can establish more frequent contact with juniors and seniors.

Slide 5: Supporting mentors

Districts and schools can support mentors by providing professional development. Training sessions can include examples of activities mentors can do with students and information they will need to help students resolve academic or personal issues that come up.

School staff can help by checking in with both students and mentors to ensure that the students are receiving the support that they need from the relationship.

Slide 6: Staffing concerns

Schools may have concerns about mentors being consistently available and maintaining relationships with students over the course of the year.

Partnering with local colleges that offer academic credit for volunteer work can help to ensure that mentors stay with the program throughout the school year. For example, college students in counseling programs may need to complete an internship and could serve as mentors to fulfill that requirement.

Slide 7: Peer activities

Students who are involved in activities with peers who plan to go to college are far more likely to pursue college themselves. Extracurricular activities and college access programs can help to develop students' interest and foster friendships between students with college aspirations.

Academically focused programs, like debate clubs or honor societies, can promote college awareness further by hosting guest students and groups from local colleges.

Slide 8: Managing resources

High schools may feel that adding college access programs or other activities will tax their limited resources. Schools can look at the activities currently being offered and evaluate how each one contributes to the school's goals and focus on college preparation.

Strategic planning sessions can help schools decide if the activities offered to students support a college-going culture and how to use available resources more efficiently.

Schools can also consider summer programs at local colleges that would allow their students to interact with college-bound peers, improve their academic preparation, and expose them to a college environment.

Slide 9: Career exploration

High school students are often uncertain what occupation or career they want to pursue, let alone how college fits into many career paths. High schools can design a series of career exploration activities to help students identify career interests and then provide opportunities that expand on those interests. These might include having local professionals talk about their education and work at a school assembly or linking up students with job-shadowing and internship opportunities.

Slide 10: Understanding requirements

Students may have a limited understanding of what is required academically for a given career. High schools can inform students about the specific skills, knowledge, and education needed for their area of interest. They can provide examples of local colleges that offer degrees in the chosen field as well as help students create a long-term education plan to guide their coursework through high school. This plan will need to be revisited regularly with each student.

Slide 11: Getting students thinking

Some ninth-grade students may not be ready to discuss careers or interests. Inviting high school alumni to talk about their career paths can help students begin thinking about their future.

Slide 12: Conclusion

By surrounding students in a culture that makes college accessible, achievable, and expected, a high school can help its students prepare for and eventually enter college.

Slide 13: Learn more

To learn more about Inspiring Students to Attend College, please see the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.