Creating a College-Going Culture with Middle School Youth

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Creating a College-Going Culture with Middle School Youth

Session Objectives

• Learn about trends related to postsecondary education and the workforce

• Understand the unique barriers to college and career readiness for vulnerable youth

• Learn about replicable strategies that foster a college-going culture through early college connections

• Learn how to successfully plan and execute a middle school college visit
Youth Thrive and Collective Impact: A Strategy for Social Change

Youth Thrive is a collective impact partnership focused on creating better conditions for Wake County youth.

Vision: All young people in Wake County become thriving adults.

Mission: To foster and maintain a sustainable community partnership that provosts the success of youth, ages 5-18, in Wake County.
Youth Thrive’s History: From Conversation to Collective Impact

• **2009:** After an increase in youth homicides in Raleigh, Dr. James West, the then Mayor Pro Tem, championed the creation of a positive youth development collaborative.

• **2009-2011:** Convenings/conversations/collaborations on how this would look in Wake County.

• **March 2011:** The John Rex Endowment provided an investment of $1.25M to support the collaborative.

• **Today:** A community-based partnership inclusive of youth-serving professionals & organizations seeking to create better outcomes for youth, ages 5-18, *using a collective impact approach.*
Youth Thrive’s Educational Success Action Team

• Facilitated by Youth Thrive Staff and led by representatives from Wake County Public School, Post-Secondary (NCSU), and the Wade Edwards Learning Lab

• Participation from 15+ other youth serving organizations

• **Goal:** 95% of students graduate high school ready for college and career

• **Action Focus:** Promote access to college by working to ensure that by 9th grade, all students have the opportunity to visit at least one college
Our Team's Strategies

• Develop a planning guide for out-of-school time providers to take 8th graders on college visits
• Host a “proof of concept” college visit day for middle school youth
• Partner with local middle schools to work toward college visits becoming the 8th grade school trip

“IMPORTANT PRECOLLEGE STRATEGIES MUST BEGIN BEFORE HIGH SCHOOL”
Why College Visits for Middle Schoolers are Important
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• By 2020, 65% of jobs will require some form of postsecondary education, with a high school diploma as a prerequisite (Recovery 2020, Georgetown).

• According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 85.8% of North Carolinians have completed high school, and 28.4% have completed a bachelor's degree or higher (2016).

• Eight out of 10 young people expect to attain a bachelor's degree or higher, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2016)
Why College Visits for Middle Schoolers are Important

• **Low-income students** and those who are the first in their families to pursue higher education are **severely underrepresented on college campuses**.

• While efforts to provide and communicate financial support options to low-income students have increased over the past two decades, the **30% gap in college enrollment between low-income and middle- to upper-class students** has persisted since the 1960s (Kirst & Venezia, 2001).
Why College Visits for Middle Schoolers are Important

• High school graduation rates have been steadily increasing in Wake County, with 87.1% of students graduating on time (NC Department of Public Instruction, 2017).

• However, there is still room for improvement, especially when various subgroups are considered.
Graduation rates may be increasing but college-going is on the decline.
Post-secondary Success

• Students must be provided early academic, social, and psychological supports in order to be prepared for and to succeed in postsecondary education.

• Strategies for increasing rates of college enrollment and enhancing preparation for postsecondary education start before high school and provide opportunities for college awareness and exposure in addition to academic support.
The Value of a College Visit

• Campus visits can provide the most powerful means for middle school students to envision their own place in Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs).

• Early exposure to college campuses is a strategy widely used by most "early preparation for college" programs for underrepresented groups.
Creating the Middle School College Connection

Goals for the Visit for Middle School Youth

• Learn what college life is all about (living arrangements, social aspects, dining hall, etc.)
• Let students visit and "see" the liberties, responsibilities, and differences between the managed schedule of middle school and independent college life
• Start envisioning themselves on a college campus
• Visit stadiums or arenas

Visits Should Not Focus on

• Financial aid
• GPAs
• ACT or SAT scores
Ideas for Planning

- Developing a successful plan for students, schools, and/or the supporting community requires thoughtful attention to those unique factors of the youth and communities you want to reach.

- A clear understanding of how all partners and stakeholders can contribute will make for a meaningful event. Consider establishing a core set of working assumptions/preconditions for success:
  - Cost
  - Transportation
  - Language
  - Who is your target audience?

- Have a planning check list (see our guide for things to consider)
Preparing Youth

- Review agenda with your youth participants
- Have youth complete pre-survey (see our guide for sample)
- College knowledge scavenger hunt
  - Things about the college you are visiting
  - Familiarize with college terms (undergrad, professor, campus, etc.)
- Set up a CFNC account
  - Do an interest profile (talk about related college majors)

Discover your passion?
CFNC.org
College works.
Preparing Parents and Families

• Send home a letter (translate if necessary)
• Provide agenda
• If applicable, invite parents to attend- have a track for parents to learn about the importance of college
• Permission forms
• Make sure parents/families know the importance of the visit
• Provide them with the schedule
• CFNC- parent page resources
Preparing the Campus Staff

• Most University Admissions offices are used to doing visits for 11-12th graders, not middle school youth
• Consider reaching out to a specific department that your participants are interested in
• Explain your goals for the visit to your contact
• Ensure that faculty are comfortable relating to younger students
THE WAKE COUNTY DEMONSTRATION

3 MIDDLE SCHOOLS - 3 CAMPUS VISITS
Pre-Survey Results: Carrol, Dillard, and Reedy Creek Middle Schools

- 137 students completed the survey
- 45% of students had never visited a college campus before
- 40% had a parent that attended college
- 69% of students thought they would attend college
- 68% could picture themselves as a college student
- 30% believed they could afford to go to college
- 46% could name a college major
- 31% did not know about campus clubs
- 41% did not know about student support services
- 55% had never talked with a college student about college
- 66% had never talked with someone who works at a college
Best Quotes from Surveys

• Do you have a bedtime?
• Are your teachers mean?
• Is Wake Tech a good college for social kids?
• What is the punishment for skipping class?
• How many hours do you go to school a day?
• What is your day like?
• Is it worth it?
Educational Success Action Team: Middle School College Visits

DILLARD DRIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL AT WAKE TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FEBRUARY 23, 2018
Educational Success Action Team: Middle School College Visits

CARROLL MIDDLE SCHOOL AT SHAW UNIVERSITY
FEBRUARY 23, 2018
Educational Success Action Team: Middle School College Visits

REEDY CREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL AT NC STATE UNIVERSITY
MARCH 2, 2018
Successes

• The 45% that had not visited a college campus now have!
• The 66% that had not talked with someone that worked at a college campus now have!
• Dining halls were a favorite!
• Campus student presence at Shaw- youth seemed to connect well and get energized by the cheer team, football players, and student president
• Engineering at Wake Tech
• STEM activities at NCSU
• Parent session at NCSU
Planning Team: General Reflections

- The purpose of the visit needs to be the central focus/framework, not just activities on campus
- Need to be clear about drop off and bus parking
- Having time to learn about institutions and ask questions of college students (possibly have Q&A at the end and for parents)
- Scavenger hunts/safety concern for youth on campus (i.e. not enough chaperones for smaller groups)
- Early release is not sufficient time to reach our goals of the visit
- Bilingual staff & college students may be necessary to better support students and parents (diversity)
- Campus meeting facilitates locations should be considered (chapel, etc.)
Planning Team: General Reflections

- Presentations should reflect a balance of academics and the social aspects of campus life (connection to jobs)
- Integration of campus cheer squad and athletes helped show a balance in student life
- The ability to learn about various programs/degree options through classroom experience with instructors
- Highlight student activities & supports: student health, mental health, financial aid, etc.
Planning Team Reflections: What Can Be Improved?

- Greater preparation of campus tour guides; considerations for age and stage development in information delivery, balanced perspectives of college life, etc.
- Q&A sessions should reference/be scripted to include important themes
- Inclusion of social components: interactions with student clubs; cheer teams; sororities/fraternities; etc. can create important connections
- Clearer directions/campus maps provided for chaperones and/or bus drivers
- Opportunities to see students in a dorm, library, classroom, student center, etc.
- Additional opportunitiesstrategies for parental engagement
Youth-Thrive.org

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