



REL Appalachia Ask A REL Response

College and Career Readiness, Family and Community Engagement, Postsecondary
September 2018

Question:

What are strategies for successfully engaging families in postsecondary planning and transitions?

Response:

Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about family engagement in postsecondary planning and transitions. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. Ask A REL provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations in response to questions about available education research.

Following an established REL Appalachia research protocol, we searched for peer-reviewed articles and other research reports on strategies to engage families during the postsecondary planning and transition process. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines. For more details, please see the methods section at the end of this document.

The research team did not evaluate the quality of the resources provided in this response; we offer them only for your reference. Also, the search included the most commonly used research databases and search engines to produce the references presented here, but the references are not necessarily comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. References are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance.

References

Fann, A., Jarsky, K. M., & McDonough, P. M. (2009). Parent involvement in the college planning process: A case study of P–20 collaboration. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 8(4), 374–393. Abstract retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ858186>; full text available at <http://www.stlouisgraduates.org/sites/default/files/files/CAP%20PDI%20Dec%208%20Parental%20Involvement.pdf>

From the abstract: “Parents who have not had opportunities to attend college themselves have neither experience with the process of college preparation and college going nor sufficient access to needed information. This article describes a collaborative venture between a university department of education and a cluster of local schools designed to help parents of first-generation students become active participants in their children’s college preparation and planning, shedding light on the importance of parental involvement in the college-going process.”

Ferguson, C. & Rodriguez, V. (2005). *Engaging families at the secondary level: What schools can do to support family involvement*. Austin, TX: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, SEDL. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED538312>

From the abstract: “This strategy brief written by the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools provides a school snapshot and uses this snapshot to discuss what strategies could be used among secondary schools to engage families. The brief lists the following actions that middle and high schools should promote that were based off of recent research (at the time). These actions include providing workshops or holding meetings, contacting families on a regular basis, welcoming family involvement in the school. Notably, the brief provides more specific recommendations on how to do the following actions. The brief also includes recommended strategies to help school staff develop effective family and community connections with schools by outlining what counselors or teacher scan do, what teachers can do, and what families can do to 1) assist families in helping students plan for the future and 2) to assist families in supporting academic instruction.”

Goodrick, J. (2007). *Preparing for college: A guide for parents. Research brief*. Southfield, MI: Education Partnerships, Inc. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED539178>

From the abstract: “With many of today’s high school students having the opportunity to be the first in their families to attend college, parents undoubtedly feel the stress of making sure that their son/daughter is fully prepared to enter this phase of their life. Making the transition from high school to college can be overwhelming for both parents and students. However, to ease some of the stress, this paper offers information that will help parents avail viable options for ensuring their child’s post-secondary success.”

Hallett, R. E., & Griffen, J. (2015). Empowering parents in the college-planning process: An action-inquiry case study. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 20(1–2), 101–119. Abstract retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1056812>

From the abstract: “Involving parents in the college-planning process is essential to increasing access for students from low-income communities of color. Using the action inquiry model, we explore how collaboration between a school district and a university can empower parents to engage in meaningful conversations and planning related to college access. This qualitative case study draws from 3 years of data gathered from the development and implementation of a college-access program designed for underperforming middle and high school students who would be first-generation college

students. Our findings suggest that parents want access to specific information, desire a deeper connection with other parents going through the process, and lack proper knowledge to feel empowered to lead discussions with their children.”

Olguin, D. L., & Keim, J. (2009). Using stakeholders as career bridges to advance students’ academic performance: How would you like your stake? *Journal of School Counseling*, 7(22), 1–22. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ886136>

From the abstract: “The New Mexico Next Step Plan, a postsecondary career transition plan for grades 8 through 12, aims to enhance relationships between all educational stakeholders: students, parents/caregivers, community, and administrators. These stakeholder relationships are intended to close the achievement gap among all students, in particular, ethnic youth. Professional school counselors need to lead this charge. Qualitative feedback from a survey and a compliance audit demonstrate how the school counseling curriculum can utilize stakeholders in career development activities to promote students’ academic success.”

Wimberly, G. L., & Noeth, R. J. (2004). *Schools involving parents in early postsecondary planning*. ACT Policy Report. Iowa City, IA: ACT. Abstract retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED483852>; full text available at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/George_Wimberly/publication/253299036_Schools_Involving_Parents_in_Early_Postsecondary_Planning/links/02e7e53bd563aa548e000000/Schools-Involving-Parents-in-Early-Postsecondary-Planning.pdf

From the executive summary: “Parents who are involved in their child’s education can be a strong and positive influence on the student’s academic achievement and postsecondary plans. However, unless parents have the information and knowledge they need, it is difficult for them to help their children explore, plan, and make the successful transition from high school to college. Studies show that parents, particularly those who did not attend college, often do not have the necessary tools, information, and resources to assist their children with college planning. The purpose of this policy report is to help schools engage parents in educational and postsecondary planning by focusing on major points in the process when this can effectively happen. It describes programs, practices, and initiatives that schools use to effectively deliver educational planning information to parents, including ways that schools involve parents in their children’s planning and decision making at key transition points:

- Academic preparation—including program and course selection
- Understanding and using assessment information
- Formulating postsecondary plans
- Learning about and obtaining financial aid for college

Schools are making efforts to reverse the trend of declining parent involvement in the middle and high school years by engaging parents in postsecondary planning activities. They now include parents in course selection, interpretation of test information, college admissions discussions, college visits, and financial aid planning. Parents who have

educational planning knowledge and timely information can increase their students' school success, facilitate their college planning, and increase the likelihood that their children will attend college. Two ACT studies examined a variety of influences on educational and postsecondary planning. In the first, we explored how parents influenced students' planning activities across grades 8–10. Students from 15 schools in six major districts were surveyed and included in focus groups to examine the impact of various influences on their future planning. The second ACT study examined students' postsecondary planning activities at the end of high school. African American and Hispanic college-bound seniors completed a postsecondary planning survey and participated in focus group discussions. These students were from 23 urban high schools in five large school districts."

Additional Ask A REL Responses to Consult

Ask A REL Appalachia at SRI International. (2017). *What research is available about communication strategies that help rural students and their families understand the potential benefits of going to college and postsecondary education and training programs and are associated with (or impact) college-going behavior?* Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/appalachia/askarel/aar04.asp>

Ask A REL Appalachia at SRI International. (2018). *From parents' perspectives, what are the key barriers to college application, enrollment, and persistence for their children?* Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/appalachia/askarel/aar28.asp>

Ask A REL Mid-Atlantic at Mathematica. (2017). *What are characteristics of schools, programs, and/or strategies that successfully transition students into careers?* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midatlantic/askarel_15.asp

Ask A REL Mid-Atlantic at Mathematica. (2017). *What are the knowledge, skills, and experiences high school students need to transition successfully into careers?* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midatlantic/askarel_14.asp

Additional Organizations to Consult

College and Career Readiness and Success Center: <https://ccrscenter.org/>

From the website: "The College and Career Readiness and Success Center (CCRS Center) is dedicated to ensuring all students graduate high school ready for college and career success. The mission of the CCRS Center is to serve Regional Comprehensive Centers in building the capacity of states to effectively implement initiatives for college and career readiness and success. Through technical assistance delivery and supporting resources, the CCRS Center provides customized support that facilitates the continuous design, implementation, and improvement of college and career readiness priorities."

Future Ready Project, Achieve: <https://www.achieve.org/future-ready>

From the website: "Achieve provides state and local college- and career-ready

stakeholders with the information, strategies, messages, and tools needed to effectively make the case for the college- and career-ready agenda in their states.”

- “What parents are saying about college and career readiness”
<https://www.achieve.org/publications/what-parents-are-saying-about-college-and-career-readiness>

The National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, SEDL:
<https://www.sedl.org/connections/>

From the website: “The Center links people with research-based information and resources that they can use to effectively connect schools, families, and communities. It emphasizes connections that directly impact student achievement in reading and mathematics, as well as connections that contribute to the students’ overall success in school and in life. The Center reviewed emerging findings and research to develop an online database, annual conferences and annual reports to help advance procedural knowledge and to link research findings to practice.”

National PTA: <https://www.pta.org/>

From the website: “PTA’s mission is to make every child’s potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.”

- College and Career Readiness resources: <https://www.pta.org/home/family-resources/College-and-Career-Readiness>

Next Steps NH: <https://nextsteps-nh.org/>

From the website: “Next Steps NH focuses on developing and sustaining the skills of New Hampshire school district staff and families to increase the college and career readiness of students with disabilities and/or those at risk of dropping out.”

- Family Engagement Toolkit: <https://nextsteps-nh.org/everything-about-transition/family-involvement-practices/next-steps-tools-family-involvement/>

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- (Parent* OR “parent engagement” OR “parent-school partnership” OR “parent involvement”) AND (college OR higher education OR postsecondary OR postsecondary transition OR postsecondary planning) AND (strateg* OR program OR event OR method OR approach OR access OR enrollment)
- (Family OR “family engagement” OR “family-school partnership” OR “family involvement”) AND (college OR higher education OR postsecondary OR

postsecondary transition OR postsecondary planning) AND (strateg* OR program OR event OR method OR approach OR access OR enrollment)

Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC, a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic database ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the commercial search engine Google.

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

In reviewing resources, Reference Desk researchers consider—among other things—these four factors:

- **Date of the publication:** Searches cover the most current information (i.e., within the last ten years), except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- **Search priorities of reference sources:** Search priorities include IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols. Applicable resources must be publicly available online and in English.
- **Methodology:** The following methodological priorities/considerations guide the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized controlled trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc., generally in this order; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected), study duration, etc.; (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.
- **Existing knowledge base:** Vetted resources (e.g., peer-reviewed research journals) are the primary focus, but the research base is occasionally slim or nonexistent. In those cases, the best resources available may include, for example, reports, white papers, guides, reviews in non-peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, and organization websites.

Resources included in this document were last accessed on September 17, 2018. URLs, descriptions, and content included here were current at that time.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by education stakeholders in the Appalachia region (Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia (REL AP) at SRI International. This Ask A REL response was developed by REL AP under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0004 from the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, administered by SRI International. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.