REL Appalachia Ask A REL Response
College and Career Readiness
February 2020

Question:

What is the evidence base for the effectiveness of college visits for middle school and elementary school students?

Response:

Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about the effectiveness of college visits. 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 the effectiveness of college visits. We focused on identifying resources that specifically addressed the effects of college visits for middle school and elementary school students on college readiness outcomes. Because college visits are often one component of college outreach programs, in some of the references below we have included a note about the relevant page number for information about college campus visits. 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

Glessner, K. (2016). *Yes, I can: The effect of a college visit and online career intervention on eighth-grade students' college and career self-efficacy and college intent*. Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/1143/.

*From the abstract: "*This study examined the effect of a college workshop on the college and career self-efficacy and college intent of eighth grade students in a semi-rural setting. The study aimed to fill the gap in the literature by examining college and career self-efficacy and college intent for middle school students in semi-rural areas in the United States as they move to high school. Two groups of eighth grade students from two middle schools in a school district in West-Central Florida participated in the study. The study used a quasi- experimental, pretest-posttest non-equivalent waitlist control group design. Students in the treatment group participated in a week-long online career exploration workshop followed by a visit on the campus of a large suburban Florida state college. Students in the waitlist control group took the pretest and posttest after data had been collected; however, they did not receive the treatment until after the posttest. The study answered the research questions whether participation in the college workshop affected participants' posttest scores regarding college and career self-efficacy as well as college intent. Pretest and posttest used the College-Going Self-Efficacy Scale for Middle School Students and the Career Self-Efficacy Scale-Short Form, as well as a College Intent Question, which inquired about students' intent to attend college. Data analyses included a chi-square of independence and analyses of covariance. Results showed that students who participated in the college workshop had higher levels of college-going and career-decision self-efficacy than students who did not. However, college intent was not affected by participation in the college workshop."

Radcliffe, R. A., & Bos, B. (2013). Strategies to prepare middle school and high school students for college and career readiness. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas, 86(4),* 136–141. Abstract retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1009795; full text available at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Beth_Bos/publication/277598567_Radcliffe_R_A_Bo s_B_2013_Strategies_to_prepare_middle_school_and_high_school_students_for_college_a nd_career_readiness_Clearing_House_86_4_136_- _141doi101080000986552013782850/links/56544d5908aefe619b19cba8.pdf

*From the abstract: "*Trends among adolescents continue to be discouraging in terms of career and college readiness based on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) achievement reports and high school graduation rate data. In response, this article presents five goals and eight strategies we have engaged in during a seven-year research study focused on building college and career readiness among adolescents. During our final year of helping students build college and career readiness, we found associated improvements in their academic-related perceptions, beliefs, and strategies; positive personal achievement and goal orientation; rising perceptions of college; improving trends in academic performance; and stronger perseverance in high school when compared to a control group. Because the students in this study have not completed their high school senior year, we do not have data that predict their college acceptance or career readiness."

Note. On page 138 there is a section titled *Visit University and Community College Campuses.*

Seftor, N. S., Manum, A., & Schirm, A. (2009). *The impacts of regular Upward Bound on postsecondary outcomes 7–9 years after scheduled high school graduation.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED505850

From the abstract: "This last report from Mathematica's evaluation of Upward Bound analyzes data from the final round of survey and transcript data collection as well as administrative records from the National Student Clearinghouse and the federal Student Financial Aid files. It provides the first estimates of the effects of Upward Bound on postsecondary completion. The report also updates previous estimates of the program's effects on postsecondary enrollment and receipt of financial aid. Except for a statistically significant increase in the likelihood of earning a postsecondary certificate or license from a vocational school, the report finds no detectable effects on postsecondary outcomes, including enrollment, financial aid application or receipt, or the completion of bachelor's or associate's degrees. In addition to these results, the report includes the findings from extensive subgroup and sensitivity analyses."

Note. On page 5 there is a description of the academic course, activities, and nonacademic services (including touring college campuses) that are provided through Upward Bound.

Swanson, E., Kopotic, K., Zamarro, G., Mills, J., Greene, J., & Ritter, G. (2019). *An evaluation of the educational impact of college campus visits: A randomized experiment* (EDRE Working Paper No. 2019-002). Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas, College of Education & Health Professions. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3329946##

From the abstract: "We hypothesize that a lack of experience with college poses a non-trivial barrier to college access for historically underrepresented students. We study whether visits to a college campus during the eighth grade can reduce these psychological barriers to college access. Using an experimental design, we study whether college visits affect students' knowledge about college, postsecondary intentions, college-going behaviors, academic engagement, and ninth grade course enrollment decisions. We recruited 885 students across 15 schools who participated in our project during the academic year 2017–2018. We randomized students within schools to either a treatment or control condition. Students in the control condition receive an information packet about college. Students in the treatment condition receive the same information and visit a flagship university three times during their 8th-grade academic year. Students assigned to participate in these campus visits demonstrate higher levels of knowledge about college, higher levels of effort while completing the survey, a higher likelihood of having conversations with school personnel about college, and a decreased desire to attend technical school. Additionally, treated students are more likely to enroll in advanced math and science/social science courses in 9th grade."

Tierney, W. G., Bailey, T., Constantine, J., Finkelstein, N., & Hurd, N. F. (2009). *Helping students navigate the path to college: What high schools can do: A practice guide* (NCEE #2009-4066). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED506465

From the guide: "The goal of this practice guide is to formulate specific and coherent evidence-based recommendations for use by educators addressing the challenge of increasing access to higher education. The guide provides practical, clear information on critical topics related to what schools can do to help students navigate the path to college and is based on the best available evidence as judged by the panel. Recommendations presented in this guide should not be construed to imply that no further research is warranted on the effectiveness of particular strategies for increasing access to postsecondary education."

Note. Recommendation 4 is to engage and assist students in completing critical steps for college entry. For example, "High schools should coordinate college visits to expose students to the college environment and to help them select a college" (page 31). Exhibit 4 on page 34 provides an example of a college visit schedule.

Additional Ask A REL Responses to Consult

Ask A REL Northeast & Islands at Education Development Center. (2019). *What research is available on the career advising practices of middle and high school counselors?* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/AskAREL/Response/93

Additional Organizations to Consult

National Association For College Admission Counseling: https://www.nacacnet.org/

From the website: "The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), founded in 1937, is an organization of more than 15,000 professionals from around the world dedicated to serving students as they make choices about pursuing postsecondary education. NACAC is committed to maintaining high standards that foster ethical and social responsibility among those involved in the transition process, as outlined in NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices (CEPP)."

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

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

- "college visit*" AND (middle OR elementary) AND effect
- "college campus visit*" AND (middle OR elementary) AND effect
- "college readiness" AND "college visit*"

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 information available within the last ten years, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- Reference sources: IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols receive highest priority. 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 February 10, 2020. URLs, descriptions, and content included here were current at that time.