

Paving the Way to Postsecondary Education: Nonacademic Supports for Successful Student Transitions

Student Scenarios Activity

October 22, 2018, 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Cedar Bluff, Virginia

Student Scenarios

Student A:

Introduction

Student A is a grade 10 student at Western Valley High School. She is the middle child of three, with an older brother in the military and a 12-year-old sister with multiple disabilities. Her dad is a machinist and, although his work is in a high-demand field, he is currently unemployed due to a substance abuse problem. Student A's mom works at home as a part-time medical transcriptionist, and her primary responsibility involves caring for her 12-year-old daughter who is disabled.

Student A has a weekend job at the local hardware store and enjoys spending time outside with a couple of cats that live in the area. She also has a strong relationship with her younger sister and enjoys helping her with daily activities. When her brother comes home, she talks with him about his work in the military. He works in communications, and his job sounds important and interesting. He uses highly technical equipment and works as part of a team.

Student A completed a college and career survey offered by the school counselor that included questions about interests and hobbies, academic strengths and talents, college and career preparation, and leadership qualities. She thinks about what she wants to do after high school but hasn't taken specific steps to plan for postsecondary education.

Academic considerations

Student A enjoys school and finds it a stable environment compared to her less predictable home life. She thrives in her science class when the lessons and assignments are hands on. On those science assignments, she usually earns A's. She tends to struggle in classes that require memorizing facts and formulas and taking multiple-choice tests. She usually completes all assignments on time, but she admits to being somewhat of a procrastinator. She knows if she planned a little better to complete assignments earlier and more thoughtfully, her Grade Point Average (GPA) would probably be higher than the 3.1 she currently holds.

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Socio-emotional considerations

Teachers and friends would describe Student A as easygoing and nice when she is comfortable with you; otherwise, she is a bit shy. She is comfortable with a B- average. She likes to take her time to understand her work, and she prefers working individually at her own pace. When she is working in a group setting, she usually goes along with everyone but does not lead the group. If she does not understand something, she rarely raises her hand to ask questions during class; instead, she asks the teacher for help outside of class, such as during lunch.

Logistical considerations

Student A is conflicted about whether to stay in the area after high school or to leave. She has never traveled more than 100 miles outside of her community and is intrigued by the work her brother is doing in the military. However, she realizes her mom is struggling to care for her younger sister, so her decision will hinge on how things progress at home. Ideally, student A expects to attend her local community college before transferring to a 4-year university nearby. She thinks that she may return home after college but has not decided yet.

Financial considerations

Student A knows the family will not be able to provide financial support for her postsecondary education. Her sister's medical bills take any extra money that her mom can set aside. She hopes that she can get a grant or scholarship or something to help pay for college but has little understanding of the funding options or the requirements to secure one of them.

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Student B:

Introduction

Student B is in the fall semester of his senior year at Southwest High School. He is the oldest of two children, with a sister in grade 9. He lives with his dad most of the time but finds himself on the sofa at a friend’s house multiple times a week. It just hasn’t been the same at home since his mom left two years ago. Student B is somewhat disconnected from his younger sister. Although he cares for her, they have little in common. His dad tries to be a good father, but meeting customer needs at his small engine repair shop leaves little time for family.

Student B is eager to move away from the area. He enjoys developing video blogs and posting to social media, and he wants to work in videography after high school. He helps his dad at the shop a few afternoons a week for a small wage, but he really dislikes this work and feels it takes away the time he needs to focus on videography. He is a member of the school yearbook staff and records school events using videos and photography.

Academic considerations

Student B is highly motivated when the course content is relevant to his interests. He is quite bright but doesn’t want to “waste his time” in courses that he believes are not relevant for his future. He has a 2.3 Grade Point Average (GPA), which is satisfactory, in his opinion, to get him started at community college. He took the ACT earlier in the year and scored a 20 on both the math and reading components. He believes that, once others see his videography, he will have the kind of career opportunities that he dreams of.

Socio-emotional considerations

Student B enjoys the creative process and prefers to work independently. He is confident with his technical skills and has some difficulty accepting constructive criticism. He doesn’t typically ask for help and prefers to figure things out on his own. His core course teachers (English, math, science, and civics) describe him as “difficult to read.” He appears to have a few close friends but seems standoffish and uninterested in expanding his friendship group. However, the yearbook sponsor has a different view of

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Student B. From her perspective, he is a responsible and talented staff member. However, she worries that he only operates with confidence in spaces where he is comfortable, like yearbook, and that he might be unwilling to seek help when he goes to college.

Logistical considerations

Student B plans to start his postsecondary education at the local community college and is committed to moving away from the area once he identifies a viable career option. He anticipates working at least part time while enrolled. He has been saving for a car since his mom left and hopes to purchase one after graduation.

Financial considerations

Student B's dad will not be able to assist with college costs. He knows he will need financial assistance, but he's not sure how to get it.

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Student C:

Introduction

Student C is in grade 8 at Stevenson Middle School. She is the youngest of four siblings and active in church and community activities. Her oldest brother and sister are involved in missionary work and they share the challenges and rewards of living a life of service abroad with her. The third sibling is a high school senior and intends to become a special education teacher. This sibling knows there's a great need for special education teachers and feels a calling to serve this population. Student C's mother and father died when she was 5, so she and her siblings are being raised by her aunt and uncle who have two children of their own. Student C's home life is stable, but money is always tight.

Student C thinks about career options but hasn't committed to any field. She is not interested in missionary work or a teaching career. She feels some pressure from her family to enter a service field and feels somewhat guilty that she doesn't have this inclination. Last summer she received a scholarship to join a theater group and found the experience surprisingly rewarding. She had a small part in a local presentation and felt quite comfortable on stage. She's hopeful that she can participate in next year's production as well.

Academic considerations

Student C usually earns A's in her classes and is a consistent honor roll student. Student C is taking Algebra 1 in grade 8. She excels, always finishes her homework on time, and helps her classmates who struggle. In her other core subjects, such as reading/English, science, and social studies, she is getting high marks as well. If a teacher offers extra credit to boost a grade, she'll do the extra work if she has time because she enjoys the challenge. Her state test scores in math and reading were "Advanced Proficient" in grade 7.

Socio-emotional considerations

Teachers and friends would describe Student C as studious and social. Student C works hard in school, and if she doesn't understand something, she uses lunch and other breaks to get one-on-one support from the teacher. She is proactive in raising her hand during class to ask a question. Teachers

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often call on her to answer a question because they know she is paying attention. She likes group work and usually acts as a leader during group activities or projects. Sometimes she gets anxious about homework because she pressures herself to complete it perfectly. A perfectionist, she exhausts herself trying to please teachers, peers, and family.

Logistical considerations

Student C hopes to remain in her community after high school and college. She has strong ties in the area and would like to raise her own family in the region. She is also aware that attending a 4-year college means being far away from her family during that time. She has not quite figured out all of her options but hopes that she will learn more about college options in high school.

Financial considerations

Student C's family will be paying her older sister's college expenses with a mix of need-based grants and loans. Student C has not talked with her family about paying for her college education but assumes that she will require need-based grants and loans. She also knows she will need to work at least part time if she goes to college.

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Student Scenarios Summary Table

Student	Grade level	Potential strengths	Potential challenges	Recommended practices
Student A				
Student B				
Student C				

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Student Scenarios – Small Group Discussion Questions

1. What are this student’s strengths/challenges that promote/impede his/her pursuit of postsecondary education? Are there key pieces of information you would flag for future teachers or counselors?
2. What evidence-based practices would you recommend as next steps for this student? How might you help the student’s teachers become aware of these practices?
3. What evidence-based practices currently exist in the system (school/district/community college) that might help a student like this to make a successful transition to postsecondary education? Are there other practices that should be considered for implementation across the system?
4. Are there key pieces of information missing from the scenario that would affect your advising approach? How would you obtain the missing information?

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Student Scenarios – Gallery Walk Guiding Questions

1. What resources are available in Virginia to education professionals (such as teachers, counselors, administrators) that help to improve the implementation of evidence-based practice and strategies related to students' transition to postsecondary education?
2. What supports, resources, or programs are currently available in your school, district, or community to promote students' transition to postsecondary education?
3. What additional supports, resources, or programs are needed to improve students' transition to postsecondary education in your community?