



AGES 11–23

Supporting young people to:

PREPARE FOR COLLEGE

Prepare for College is a young person's experience with an adult who helps them explore their college and career aspirations, needs, and fit.

Providing college support requires taking time to work alongside young people to complete school and financial aid applications and helping them chart their own unique college and career pathways. This is a Focused Experience for young people, one that specifically bolsters College SEL.

WHAT

DOES PREPARING FOR COLLEGE LOOK LIKE AS A PART OF OUR PROGRAM?

Supporting young people to Prepare for College is about more than test preparation, it is about helping them envision a positive future and aiding them to create plans to achieve their goals. It also involves providing them with the tools and resources necessary to identify options to apply to and pay for college.

RESEARCH-BASED EXPERIENCES

- * [ONE]** **Work with young people (or match them with mentors or older peers) to help them understand what is needed in order to apply to college.** Help them to research the colleges and universities they are interested in. Make a checklist of all the application requirements for their top choices. Help young people identify the qualities that define a strong college application, including how to structure and write a compelling personal essay.
- * [TWO]** **Help young people to explore various options to pay for their college education.** Review the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) application and its related opportunities: Pell Grants, Stafford Loans, Federal Perkins Loans, and the Federal Work-Study Program. Help young people identify and research other public and private scholarships, grants, and loans they may be eligible for. Encourage them to explore the work study opportunities at the colleges they're applying to.
- * [THREE]** **Support young people to develop a positive vision for their college future.** Emphasize the value and attainability of college and support young people to create a vision for their positive future in college by tapping into their interests and passions.
- * [FOUR]** **Support young people to practice job and study skills, such as note taking and time management.** Help them identify aspects of studying or testing that challenge them, working with them to develop coping strategies to navigate these challenges. Consider staging SAT/ACT study sessions and practice tests. Debrief afterwards to help young people identify what went well and what they struggled with.
- * [FIVE]** **Support young people to develop concrete plans to achieve their future visions.** Help them develop mini-goals toward their visions and celebrate their successes along the way.
- * [SIX]** **Create a safe space for young people to discuss any fears or concerns they have about transitioning to college.** Help them to identify coping strategies and resources they can draw on for support once they're at college.

WHY

IS PREPARING FOR COLLEGE IMPORTANT?

Across the United States, young people increasingly leave high school unprepared for college (Choy, Horn, Nuñez, & Chen, 2000; Jackson, 2009). While they may be academically prepared, they are not college ready -- lacking the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that will allow them to successfully access and succeed in college (Conley, 2007a, 2007b). Specifically, they are unaware of their college options and do not know how to select an appropriate college that will meet their needs (Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011, p. 187). In addition, few young people understand admission criteria, the application process, and academic course and financial requirements (Venezia & Kirst, 2005; Wimberly & Noeth, 2005).

However, research shows that when adults help young people prepare for college, emphasizing the value and attainability of college, assisting them to select the “right college,” and supporting them to fill out application and financial aid forms, they are more likely to enroll in and graduate from four-year colleges (Kless, L., et al., 2013, Conley et al., 2010; Corwin & Tierny, 2007; McClafferty, McDonough, & Nuñez, 2002; Perna et al., 2007). Specific studies demonstrate that young people are more likely to apply for and receive financial aid when adults help them fill out the FAFSA (Federal Application for Federal Student Aid) (Bettinger, Long, Oreopoulos, & Sanbonmatsu, 2009; Venezia and Kirst’s, 2005). They are also more likely to enroll in college if adults help them with college applications or entrance exam preparation (Choy, Horn, Nuñez, & Chen, 2000; Perna et al., 2007; Venezia & Kirst, 2005).

DISCOVERIES FROM HELLO INSIGHT

Hello Insight has found that Prepare for College is a focused experience that supports both Core SEL and College SEL development. College SEL encapsulates Goal Orientation and College Outlook, two capacities that are related to young people’s disposition to attend college. Young people with these attributes have the confidence and belief that they can succeed in college. Growth in College SEL is highly correlated with Core SEL development, as these two sets of capacities work together to make a young person college ready.

HOW HAVE OTHER PROGRAMS INCORPORATED EXPANDING INTERESTS?

PYD, including Preparing for College, is not a curriculum, it is a way of working with young people that has been proven to promote SEL. You can incorporate Preparing for College in a wide variety of interventions and programs. Here is how some Hello Insight members have integrated this practice into their programs.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Beginning in 6th grade, the YMCA of the Triangle’s Lightner Y Achievers program alumni share stories of overcoming academic challenges as they provide a vision for how to persevere in the face of adversity.



They place an equal emphasis on college and career readiness and mental wellness, stressing the importance of healthy connections and relationships with peers and trusted adults. Adult volunteers and mentors provide consistent support and clarity to first generation college students in hopes of removing any apprehension or intimidation about the application process or the college experience.

At the Queens Community House, College Access and Success Program (CASP), there are multiple peer learning opportunities.



For example, they engage young people across school sites to learn from one another, sharing tips and strategies for a successful start in college. Young people in CASP read powerful stories (such as Youth Communication) written by teens about their college experience, learning about potential challenges, how to navigate them, and build their SEL skills.

HOW

CAN OUR PROGRAM BEST SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE TO PREPARE FOR COLLEGE?

Use this reflection guide with your staff to explore “bright spots”—practices that you already use to help young people Prepare for College, highlight potential “accelerators”—practices that could be easily incorporated into your work, and “challenges”—things that might make helping young people Prepare for College difficult.

PRACTICES Ways to support young people	BRIGHT SPOTS Examples of what the program already does	ACCELERATORS Ways you could easily incorporate this practice	CHALLENGES What might make this practices difficult to do
Work with young people to help them understand what is needed in order to apply to college			
Help young people to explore various options to pay for their college education			
Support young people to develop a positive vision for their college future			
Support young people to practice job and study skills, such as note taking and time management			
Support young people to develop concrete plans to achieve their future visions			
Create a safe space for young people to discuss any fears or concerns they have about transitioning to college			



This guide is part of a set meant to help youth-serving programs incorporate PYD. Visit www.ins.gt/pyd-exp to learn more.

■ View a full list of citations at www.ins.gt/citations



helloinsight.org



info@helloinsight.org



888-456-6085