College Preparation: College Fit

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Time Frame   120-180 session(s)

Essential Question(s)

- What things can colleges or universities offer me?

- What do I want and need in a college or university?

- Which college or university best fits my needs?

Summary

Students will explore the many options offered by colleges and universities across the United States. Students will also learn what documents and preparation are required for the college application process.

Learning Goals

- Students will self-identify personal needs or requirements they hope to find fulfilled in a college or university.

- Students will use identifiers to filter and find colleges or universities that best fit or fulfill those needs or requirements.

- Students will participate in a Magnetic Statements strategy to explore factors that dictate college selection.

- Students will complete a college fit worksheet.

- Students will share and discuss their findings.

- Students will research their choice colleges and universities.

- Students will use OK College Start to begin the college application process.

Attachments

- [College Application Checklist—College Fit.pdf](#)
- [College Comparison Sheet—College Fit.pdf](#)
- [College Fit Worksheet—College Fit.pdf](#)
- [Magnetic Statements—College Fit.pdf](#)

Materials

- Magnetic Statements (attached; printed)
- College Application Checklist (attached)
- College Fit Worksheet (attached)
- Computer Lab
- Internet
- Transcripts

Engage

> **Before Beginning**
>
> Students will participate in a Magnetic Statements activity at the beginning of this lesson. To prepare, print the attached **Magnetic Statements** handout and post these statements around the room. Try to post them in places that have enough room for students to gather around them.

Students will participate in a [Magnetic Statements](#) activity by standing near a posted statement that best reflects the most important factor to them when choosing a college. Students will then discuss their reasons for this selection with the other students who chose that factor. Groups then choose a spokesperson to share out big ideas and interesting comments made during the discussion.

If time allows, students should choose another statement that reflects their second most important consideration and repeat the process. If time is an issue, have students simply point to their second most important factor instead. Have them record these two factors on the attached **College Fit Worksheet** to use for the next activity.

Explore

Based on the two statements recorded from the previous activity, students will use the website OKCollegeStart.org to determine four colleges that appeal to them by selecting their preferences from website-provided parameters as well as any other factors listed that they think are important to consider.

Students will use the resource College Matching Assistant from this website to determine four colleges that appeal to them based on their two recorded statements from the previous activity. Students will select the parameters provided from each of the drop down menus.

> **Instructions To Navigate To College Matching Assistant**
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> Click the "College Planning" tab at the top of the home screen. Then, underneath the original tabs, click "Explore Schools." Next, click the "College Matching Assistant" tab underneath the "School Exploration Tools" section. A new page will load showing drop down menus with parameters such as Public or Private, Size of School, etc.

OKCollegeStart.org will generate a list of suggested colleges based on criteria the students enter. These are the colleges students will write down on the attached **College Comparison Sheet** handout (students may also have a particular college they want to research that did not come up from the website so they may include the name of that college as well). After writing down the suggested schools, students will begin exploring these schools, looking for application criteria, majors offered, housing options, cost, etc.

Explain

Students can share out to the group the information they found from the Explore activity (application criteria, majors offered, housing options, cost, etc.) for different schools.

To help them critically think about their selections, ask questions such as: "What are some minimum academic qualifications for different schools (GPA, ACT, SAT)?" "Are there any commonalities?" "What are the biggest cost differences between the schools that you explored?" Be sure to explore any other questions that help students process the ideas associated with the Explore activity.

Extend

Have students use their transcripts to fill in the corresponding information under "Your Transcript" on the College Fit Worksheet. Students should have a better idea of the colleges that they might be interested in (based on the list from OKCollegeStart.org and ideas from the share out) and now, also, have information about their own academic status.

Using the information they gathered, students will research their colleges and answer the following questions:

- Based on my current academic standing, what schools do I qualify for?
- Am I where I need to be academically?
- What majors am I interested in and are those offered at this school?
- What kinds of classes do these types of majors encourage me to take?

Evaluate

Students should log on to OkCollegeStart.org or to the website of the university of choice and begin the application process. Most university websites have a "Prospective Student" tab that provides a link to their online application.

Using the attached **College Application Checklist** handout, students will complete a college admissions application. This handout will help students remember passwords, check off completed tasks, and be aware of upcoming steps in the admissions process. In the future, students can use this information to complete their applications.

Remind students that completing a college admissions application may take more than one class period (or sitting). Students should save information periodically to avoid losing their completed work. Some applications are longer than others and require more information.

Peer/teacher Editing

Students should have more than one person review their college admissions application before submitting it. College admissions applications should be complete with no grammatical errors and false information.

Discussion Summary (If Not Emphasized In Student Conversation)

Students who are interested in attending college should consider applying to those universities and colleges that meet their needs. If the student wants to be a veterinarian, they should be sure to apply to a college that will assist them in preparing for that occupation through the proper major. Students should apply to at least three colleges: (1) a dream college, (2) a reality college, and (3) a backup college. A lot can happen over the course of senior year and the summer before college, so students should be prepared by applying to more than one college. After they have submitted their college admissions application, remind them to check their email weekly (at least), as colleges will, oftentimes, respond to applicants through email if there is missing or incorrect information. The steps students take now are key to their postsecondary success.

Follow-up Activities

Meet with students either individually or in small groups to assess how the application process is going. Ask if they have questions about certain sections or what help they might need before submitting the application. Remind students it is highly recommended to have at least one adult (teacher, mentor, counselor, parent, etc.) review the application before submitting it.

Research Rationale

Students who attend college after graduation and complete a four-year degree enjoy greater job satisfaction and better quality of life post-graduation, and college graduates have significantly better opportunities for upward career mobility and earning a living wage (Okerson, 2016). College readiness is a process, not a program. The reasons students do not matriculate to college are many and varied (King, 2012). To mitigate the college-going gap, high school students need both support and assistance in preparing for and attending college (Radcliffe & Bos, 2013; King, 2012; Sherwin, 2012). Many students have no idea where to begin when searching for a college that will best fit their needs as a student. When students can envision themselves on a particular college campus that meets their personal, social, academic, and financial needs, this is college fit or match (Sherwin, 2012). According to Venezia & Jaeger (2013), college fit is defined as being comfortable with aspects of the university or college such as cost, location, size, student-faculty ratio, counseling and advising services, student body composition, and areas of study offered. Students do not know that they can and should consider these things when applying to college. Alvarado and An (2015), Belasco (2012), and King (2012) all found that minority students, first-generation college applicants, and students whose families have low socioeconomic status (SES) rely more heavily on their schools for guidance when it comes to finding and applying to the best college for them. Therefore by providing students an intentional opportunity to explore and understand the multiple options available for college will help create a college-going culture within the school and establish clear expectations that all students have the ability and opportunity to attend college.

Resources

- Alvarado, S. E. & An, B. P. (2015). Race, friends, and college readiness: Evidence from the high school longitudinal study. Journal of Race and Social Problems, 7(2), 150-167.
- Belasco, A. (2013). Creating college opportunity: School counselors and their influence on postsecondary enrollment. Research in Higher Education, 54(7), 781-804.
- King, S. (2012). Increasing the college going rate, parent involvement, and community participation in rural communities. Rural Educator, 33(2), 20-26.
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Magnetic statements. Strategies. Retrieved from https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f50761bf
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- Sherwin, J. (2012). Make me a match: Helping low-income and first-generation students make good college choices (Policy brief). Retrieved from https:// www.mdrc.org/publication/make-me-match