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Evidence in Action

A K20 Center Research Brief

College-Going Culture in High Schools: The Effects of College Expectations and College Talk on Students' Postsecondary Attendance

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Introduction

The research article by Bryan et al. (2018) investigates the role of social capital and college-going culture in high schools on students' postsecondary attendance. The literature reviewed highlights the importance of social networks within schools, where interactions between students and college-educated faculty and staff can naturally support students' transition to postsecondary education. The study aims to understand how college expectations and college-related interactions (college talk) with school staff influence students' likelihood of attending college. The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform interventions that can enhance college-going cultures in high schools, thereby increasing college attendance rates.

Methodology

Research Design:

The study utilizes data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002), a nationally representative dataset. The research design is quantitative, employing logistic regression to analyze the impact of college expectations and college talk on students' postsecondary attendance.

Sample:

The sample consists of 13,983 students who completed surveys in their tenth grade (2002), twelfth grade (2004), and two years after expected high school graduation (2006). The dataset includes responses from students, parents, teachers, principals, and librarians.

Data Analysis:

Data were analyzed using logistic regression models to predict the probability of students attending a postsecondary institution within two years of high school graduation. The analysis controlled for student demographics, prior achievement, high school course-taking, and college admissions testing.



Results

The study found that both college expectations and college talk had a significant impact on students' likelihood of attending college. Key findings include:

- **College Expectations:** High school students who perceived strong college expectations from school staff in both tenth and twelfth grades were more likely to attend college. The impact was greater for twelfth-grade expectations.
- **College Talk:** Conversations about college with school counselors, teachers, and coaches in twelfth grade significantly increased the odds of attending college. However, college talk in tenth grade did not have a significant impact.
- **Other Factors:** Female students, students with higher standardized test scores, and those who took or planned to take AP courses and college admissions tests were more likely to attend college.

Application into Practice

To replicate this intervention in a school context, the following steps can be taken:

1. **Foster College Expectations:** Encourage school staff to consistently express high expectations for college attendance to students, particularly in their senior year.
2. **Promote College Talk:** Facilitate regular conversations about college planning between students and school counselors, teachers, and coaches, especially during the senior year.
3. **Provide Resources:** Ensure that students have access to information and resources related to college admissions, financial aid, and career planning.
4. **Engage Multiple Adults:** Create a network of support where multiple school staff members are involved in providing college-related guidance to students.
5. **Monitor and Evaluate:** Implement a system to track and evaluate the effectiveness of college expectations and college talk interventions, making adjustments as needed to improve outcomes.

Work Cited

Bryan, J., Farmer-Hinton, R., Rawls, A., & Woods, C. S. (2018). Social capital and college-going culture in high schools: The effects of college expectations and college talk on students' postsecondary attendance. *Professional School Counseling, 21*(1), 95-107.
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