

MODULE FOUR



Educational Aspirations

Goal To help students set high educational aspirations, to address barriers to academic success, and to identify specific steps students can take to do better in school

Overview of Sessions

Session One

- *Purpose:* Think about educational and career aspirations, discuss steps required to reach goals, and examine barriers to reaching these goals
- *Content:* (1) Peer introduction of career goals, (2) Education and Career Ladder, (3) barriers to education

Session Two

- *Purpose:* Give students the experience of being on a college campus and expose students to positive role models
- *Content:* Field trip to local college or university

Session Three

- *Purpose:* Associate positive feelings with being a good student and help students define behaviors and skills necessary to do well in school
- *Content:* (1) *Rudy* movie clips, (2) goal setting

Session One

Activities

- ✓ Check-in
- ✓ Peer introduction of career goals
- ✓ Education and Career Ladder
- ✓ Barriers to education
- ✓ Goal setting
- ✓ Check-out

Materials

- ✓ Curriculum
- ✓ Education and Career Ladder (one for each student—see Appendix B-4a)
- ✓ My Goals sheets (two-sided, one for each student—see Appendix B-4b)
- ✓ A pad of paper large enough to be seen by all students (with questions sheet and blank Education Ladder completed *prior* to session—see below)
- ✓ Real or pretend microphone (optional)
- ✓ Brightly colored pens
- ✓ Masking tape
- ✓ Rules and consequences with the group name at the top of the rules and consequence pages. Put these up in the room before each session.

Content*Check-In**Peer Introduction of Career Goals*

The goal is to help students think about what type of career or work they want for themselves in the future. Students are asked to interview their partner in front of the group.

1. Say, “Today we will be talking about what you want to do when you have finished high school, and how you can reach that goal. You are going to be reporters and interview each other about your future goals. Then we’ll come back together, and you will use our reporter’s microphone to interview your partner so that the whole group knows about their goals. Each person in the pair will take a turn being the reporter and being the person interviewed.”
2. Have students divide into pairs. Assign pairs, or have students pick partners.
3. Say, “Ask your partner the following questions” [questions should be written on the large pad of paper so students can refer to them]:
 - a. “What is your name? (if you don’t already know)”
 - b. “What do you want to do when you grow up?”
 - c. “What is your backup career plan?”
 - d. “What education or training do you need to become what you want to be? What do you need for your backup plan?”
4. Allow 5 to 10 minutes for students to interview each other and find out the answers to the above questions. After about 5 minutes, suggest that students switch roles once they have answered the questions, so that the reporter becomes the interviewee and vice versa.

- a. Circulate and help students who may need assistance in coming up with their career plan and their backup career plan, as well as those who may be shy and have difficulty sharing.
 - b. If there is an odd number of students, pair yourself with one student; the student should interview you, and you should interview the student.
5. After the interviews, gather the students in a circle again and say (using real or imaginary microphone), “**We will now present interviews of group members about what they want to do for a job or career, their backup plans, and how they will get there. Who will be the first reporter?**” (Give real or imaginary microphone to the reporter.) Each student presents their partner’s career goals and the steps needed to reach the goal. If an answer is left out, ask the reporter, for example, “**So what kind of education or training will Bryan need to be a fireman [lawyer, NBA player, etc.]?**”
6. Accept all career goals. However, if the goal is something illegal (e.g., pimp), gently question whether this is a reasonable goal.

Educational Aspirations Activity: Education and Career Ladder

The goal is to provide students with a picture of the educational or training steps that they need to take in order to reach their career objectives. Before the beginning of the session, use the Education and Career Ladder handout as a guide and write the steps on one of the large sheets of paper or on the dry-erase board. Make a straight line on the left for age and years in school. Make sure to include spaces for preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, college/university/vocational school, and graduate/professional school. The ladder (with no steps filled in) should be made before the start of the session. Give each student an Educational and Career Ladder handout.

1. Ask, “**What educational steps have you already taken?**”
 - a. Start with preschool and elementary school so that students feel they have already accomplished some of the steps.
 - b. As students mention different steps, fill them in on the Education and Career Ladder. Make sure to go in order up the Education and Career Ladder.
2. After high school is on the board, ask students what comes next, making clear that the next steps will differ depending on their career goals.
 - a. Using each student’s previously given career goal, ask him or her, “**What kind of education or training after high school do you need to become a _____?**”
 - b. If the student does not know, ask other group members. If that still does not elicit the appropriate answer, supply the answer. If you do not know, brainstorm with the group about how the student might find out what is needed to reach the particular career goal.

1. Examples of resources are the school's career guidance counselor, professional organizations (e.g., the Plumber's Association), and the Internet.
2. You can volunteer to find out for the student if it feels as if the task would be overwhelming.
3. Be sure to discuss educational or training steps needed for the backup career goal as well as the main career goal.
- c. Remind students that each step prepares them for the next one, and that they need to try their best at each level because reaching the next level depends on how they do on the previous level. It will not work to begin trying after they finish high school.
- d. If students are interested, share information about your own education.
3. Ask students to write on their Education and Career Ladder handout the specific steps past high school necessary to reach their particular goal. Say, “**On your own handout, please write down your career goal and the education or training steps we just talked about that you need to reach your goal.**”

Barriers to Education

Say, “**Many of you have goals that would require you to go to college. What are some things that might stop you from going to college?**” Elicit their concerns and worries, and discuss them. Speakers at the field trip will also address some of these issues. The following concerns are common (possible student and leader responses are in parentheses):

1. *Financial.* (Scholarships are available; community/junior colleges.)
2. *Social.* (“People in college will be different from me, I'd feel scared to be away from my friends”—but there are usually people from all backgrounds in college; ethnic studies or other organizations exist to help students feel more supported.)
3. *Deserting my community.* (Many low-income students may feel that they are selling out or be afraid it will look like they think they are better than others from their communities. Some students may have been told this by peers or family. It is important to acknowledge this, but to point out ways that education can be used to help one's community. Education does not have to change you in ways you don't want to be changed.)
4. *Deserting my family.* (In some cultures, there may be a lot of pressure to stay in the neighborhood or live at home. Parents very often have not attended college. They may be ambivalent about having the student go to college; while they are excited for the student, they may also have concerns that their children will leave them or become different from them. It is important to be sensitive to what the child wants and to his or her culture. If the student wants to go away to college, discuss concerns about the family and the student's own need for autonomy. If the student feels more comfortable staying near family, explore nearby colleges where the student could visit often or live at home).

Goal Setting

The goal is to help students translate their long-term career goals into short-term goals that will help them do better in school now. Say, “I’m passing out a goal sheet (*My Goals sheet from Appendix B-4b*) to all of you. In order to reach the top of your Education and Career Ladder, you need to do well in school. Please take this sheet home, fill out the front side, which asks you to list your goals for the year, and bring it back when we meet after the field trip. You can earn a point or candy for bringing back your filled-out goals sheet. You don’t need to complete the back side yet, as we will do that together when we meet next time.”

1. Elicit one or two students’ goals and what is needed to achieve them to make sure students understand the assignment.
2. Examples of useful goals are to get better grades, not fail any classes, and not get suspended or sent to the principal’s office.

Check-Out

Elicit general reactions. Ask, “**Why is it important to think about how you might reach your career goals now?**” Remind students to put their Education and Career Ladder and their *My Goals* sheet in their notebook. Additionally, remind them to return their signed parent permission slips for the field trip and to bring a lunch or money to buy lunch next week for the field trip.

Session Two: Field Trip to Local College or University

(NOTE: While this session takes some planning and organization, it is definitely worth it because of the powerful inspiration it can provide to the students. If it is not possible to organize as outlined below, it is also possible, though less desirable, to simply call and arrange a campus tour at a local college.)

Activities

- ✓ Travel on bus
- ✓ Academic demonstration
- ✓ Inspirational speakers and snack
- ✓ Visit dorms, gyms, and student union
- ✓ Lunch
- ✓ Meet athletes (both genders) or enjoy entertainment (often provided by ethnic studies centers)
- ✓ Group discussion and Check-out
- ✓ Return to school on bus

Materials

- ✓ Curriculum
- ✓ Parent permission slips

- ✓ Snack foods and drinks
- ✓ Extra My Goals sheets (see Appendix B-4b)
- ✓ College search and scholarship websites handout (see Appendix B-4c)
- ✓ Money to loan students for lunch (optional)
- ✓ Camera and film to take pictures of the students at various locations (optional)

Notes about the Field Trip

1. The goals of the field trip are to expose students to college and make it real for them; to give them the experience of feeling comfortable and welcome on a college campus; and to provide students with role models with whom they can identify.
2. Planning for the field trip must begin at least a month prior to the selected date; sometimes arranging for a bus must be done even earlier.
3. In choosing a site, we suggest picking a public college or university that has high status in the community. However, if such a site is not convenient or available, utilize the college or university that is available.
4. If several groups are running at a school or several schools in a district are participating in the program, all groups can arrange to go on the field trip the same day. If necessary, modules can be switched around so that the Educational Aspirations module comes at the time of the field trip. However, the field trip should not occur until after the Trust-Building and Communication Skills module has been completed.
5. The order of activities and the specific activities are suggestions only; details will depend on the availability of resources at the particular college or university. If you cannot arrange all the suggested activities, do your best. It may take a great deal of effort to set up the field trip the first time, but once it has been arranged, coming back for future field trips is relatively simple.

Content

Travel to College or University on Bus

PARENT PERMISSION SLIPS

1. These should be passed out at least 2 weeks prior to the field trip so that you have at least one session to remind students to get the permission slips signed and returned.
2. Permission slips should be turned in to the group leader or the counseling office several days before the trip so that students without permission slips can be tracked down.

DISCUSSION ON BUS

1. Share the day's schedule with students.
2. Emphasize when the bus must leave to return to school.
3. Set guidelines for the visit to the college campus:
 - a. Stay with the group at all times.
 - b. The group rules apply on the field trip.
 - c. Listen to and be polite to speakers and guides.
 - d. Set up a lunch meeting place and time in case anyone gets lost.
4. Elicit and answer student questions.

Academic Demonstration

1. Most colleges and universities have interesting and absorbing demonstrations for prospective students that can be accessed through the admissions office, the ethnic studies centers, or the public information office. It is worth making several phone calls to access such a demonstration because the instructors are used to making presentations to secondary-school students and almost always put on an interesting show.
2. Examples are physics or chemistry demonstrations or a planetarium.
3. If no demonstration is available, arrangements can be made for students to sit in on the class of an interesting and entertaining professor. Do not expect to drop in on a class at random; doing so may be boring and counterproductive, and professors often are not open to having a group of potentially disruptive visitors unless previous arrangements have been made.

Inspirational Speakers and Snack

1. Can be done inside or outside.
2. Snack
 - a. If resources are available, it is helpful to provide a mid-morning snack (generally chips or cookies and soda or juice). If resources are not available, ask students to bring a snack from home.
 - b. Having the snack also helps students pay attention to the inspirational speakers.
3. Aim for two inspirational speakers, one of each of the following types:
 - a. Minority or low-income students who have overcome adversity to attend college and are doing well.
 1. These speakers can usually be found through ethnic studies centers or the admissions outreach office.
 2. They tell their own inspirational stories.

- b. Financial aid officers.
1. They discuss ways in which students from families with few or no financial resources can receive funding that allows them to attend the college or university.
 2. They often have pads or pencils or even T-shirts that they may give to students as souvenirs—be sure to ask if they have any material or souvenirs to share with the students when you arrange for them to speak.
 3. Suggest that each speak for 10 to 15 minutes.
 4. Introduce the speakers. Say, “We have arranged for two people to speak to you about how college can be a reality for each of you. One is a student who comes from a neighborhood like yours, and the other is the person who helps students who think they cannot afford to go to college get the money to be able to study here. Please listen carefully, and then you can ask any questions you have.”

Visit Dorms, Gyms, and Student Union

1. After listening to the speakers, this is a good time for students to tour the fun places of college. If you are familiar with the campus, you can lead an informal tour. If not, or if you would prefer not to lead the tour, college students who give tours for prospective students can give the tour (requires prearrangement, usually through the admissions office).
2. *Dorms.* It is helpful and interesting for students to tour the dorms, see what a student room looks like, explore the recreational facilities, and see where college students eat.
3. *Gyms or other recreational areas* (e.g., swimming pool, fitness center). If the campus has a sports stadium that students might have seen on TV, they enjoy visiting it. The fitness center is also often a big draw. Be sure to ask as you enter whether it is OK for students to use equipment such as treadmills or weights, and let the students know before they begin exploring.
4. *Student union.* This should be the last stop before lunch. Allow students to wander around the student store, check out various eating facilities, and so on. Many student unions have arcades, which are a huge draw for middle school and high school students. If you allow students to play in the arcade, set a clear time limit, and make sure they put their lunch money in a safe and separate place before playing.

Lunch

There are three options for lunch: (1) Students bring their lunches; (2) students buy their lunches at campus eateries; (3) lunch is provided for students. Sometimes, a campus group will be willing to donate lunch (e.g., pizzas or sandwiches and soda). This is worth inquiring about when setting up the trip. If lunch is not provided, encourage students to bring a sack lunch. However, if they wish, they can bring money to buy food on campus. If the last stop on the campus tour is the student

union, they can buy lunch there. Prearrange where students will eat lunch, depending on what or who the entertainment or speakers will be. Usually the speakers or entertainment will suggest a particular location—either indoors or outdoors.

Athlete Speakers and/or Entertainment

1. *Athlete speakers.* If available, athletes whose names or feats are known to the group members are highly valued. Arrangements can be made through the athletic department or sometimes through the admissions outreach office. The sports figures who choose to speak to students generally speak of their own struggles to go to college and talk about the importance of studying and getting good grades in order to be able to play sports in college. They often bring photos they have signed or that they will personally autograph, providing a very special souvenir. The ideal situation is to have both a male and a female athlete.
2. *Entertainment.* This can usually be arranged through the ethnic studies centers and can take the form of a step or salsa dance demonstration, singers, and so on.
3. If you have to choose between athlete speakers and entertainment, athletes who are known are usually more highly valued by group members. However, whatever can be arranged, either athlete speakers, entertainment, or both, is fine.

Group Discussion and Check-Out

1. After lunch and the speakers or entertainment, find a quiet place where the group can sit in a circle (on the lawn if it's nice out or at a round table in the student union).
2. Ask, “So what are some of your impressions from our visit today?” Guide the discussion with such questions as:
 - a. “Do you think you would like to go to a college like this? Why?”
 - b. “What are some things you especially liked today?” Students are often impressed that there are no bells and that you do not *have* to go to class. They also may be very taken with the sports figures, the tour guides, “the cute guys,” or “the sexy girls.”
 - c. “Were there any scary parts or things that made you uncomfortable?” Sometimes students worry about the size of the campus, getting lost, not knowing anyone, or being away from home. If they say they think they could never go to college, then find out what they see as obstacles, and make sure to include the obstacles in the discussion during the next session.
 - d. “Are there other questions you have?” Tell students that if they think of questions in the future, they should be sure to ask their teachers or school guidance counselor, or remark that lots of useful information is available online. Distribute the handout about college search websites and scholarship opportunities (see Appendix B-4c).
3. Say, “Remember to bring in your goal sheets next week, and we’ll talk about what you need to do to reach your goal for this year and for your future.”

*Board Buses for Return to School***Session Three**

- Activities**
- ✓ Check-in
 - ✓ Athlete analogy/clips from the movie *Rudy*
 - ✓ Discussion of being a good student
 - ✓ Discussion of goals
 - ✓ Check-out
- Materials**
- ✓ Curriculum
 - ✓ Extra My Goals sheets (see Appendix B-4b)
 - ✓ DVD of the movie *Rudy*
 - ✓ Student Strategies for Success handout (see Appendix B-4d)
 - ✓ Large pad of paper or dry-erase board
 - ✓ Markers
 - ✓ Masking tape
 - ✓ Rules and consequences with the group name at the top of the rules and consequences pages. Put these up in the room before each session.
- Content**
- Check-In*
- Educational Aspirations Activity:
Analogy of the Athlete on the Road to Success*
1. Say, “We’ve been talking a lot about our goals in life and the importance of education to achieve those goals. We will be doing that again today, but first let’s watch a few minutes of the movie *Rudy*. The movie is about a young man who dreamed about playing football at Notre Dame since the time he was a kid, but before he could play football at Notre Dame, he first had to be a student at Notre Dame.”
 2. Show scenes from the movie *Rudy*. If possible, use the DVD and view chapters 16 and 18, which depict Rudy’s hard work at a junior college and his eventual acceptance to Notre Dame. Then show chapter 20 and the beginning part of chapter 21, which depict Rudy’s tryouts for the Notre Dame football team.
 3. After showing the movie, ask, “How do you think Rudy felt when he fulfilled his dream of becoming a Notre Dame football player?” Help students identify the positive emotions associated with success.
 4. Say, “Just like each of you has goals and dreams for your life, Rudy had a dream. But to achieve this dream, he had to put in a lot of hard work. What are some

of the things he did to achieve this dream?” Elicit some of the following examples: studying hard; many, many hours of practice and training; running, lifting weights, and sweating; enduring pain and injuries; ignoring all of those, including his family, who said that it could never be done; and enduring all the ridicule of teammates.

Discussion of Being a Good Student

ADVANTAGES OF BEING A GOOD STUDENT

Say, “Even though Rudy’s goal was to be a football player, he had to learn to be a good student in order to achieve his dream. There are many advantages to being a good student. What are some of the reasons to be a good student?” Pull for the following points:

1. Being a good student gives you more options for future careers that you would enjoy.
2. Being a good student and getting more schooling usually means you will make more money.
3. Being a good student allows you to participate in sports and other fun activities.
4. Being a good student makes your family happy.
5. Being a good student stops teachers from yelling at you.

DISADVANTAGES OF BEING A GOOD STUDENT

Ask, “Are there some negative things about being a good student?” Pull for the following points:

1. Being a good student may make you feel different than your friends.
2. You may be teased by your friends or brothers and sisters.
3. If you study, you may miss out on some time hanging out with friends.

Discussion of Goals

Discuss goal sheets passed out in Session One of Educational Aspirations.

1. Ask, “Who brought back their My Goals sheets?”
 - a. Give the promised candy, sticker, or point to those who brought back completed sheets.
 - b. Pass out goal sheets to anyone who forgot, and allow time for students to fill out the sheets.
2. Ask, “What are your goals for this school year?” Have students share their goals with one another.

3. Say, “While it is very important to have goals, it is just as important to identify the specific steps that one needs to take to achieve those goals.”
 - a. Distribute the Student Strategies for Success handout to each group member.
As a group, review each item on the handout.
 - b. Ask students about obstacles that might interfere with “strategies for success” (e.g., peer pressure to joke around in class, responsibilities at home that take time from doing homework), as well as ways in which they might reward themselves for following through (e.g., calling a friend, watching TV, taking a bubble bath, having a fun snack).
 - c. Tell students to use the back side of their goal sheets to write down their own strategies for success. Emphasize the importance of including rewards for a job well done.
4. Let students know you will be checking with them next week on how they are doing with their goals and strategies for success.
5. If time permits, show the final two chapters of *Rudy* (chapters 27 and 28), which depict the highly emotional finale to Rudy’s football career at Notre Dame. Tell students, “Now we’ll watch the end of the movie. Though Rudy made the walk-on team, he did not play in an actual game until the last play of the last game of his senior year. Let’s watch.”

Check-Out

Elicit general reactions to the group. Ask, “How does it feel to commit to being a better student? Do you feel you will be able to or willing to carry out your commitment? What might get in your way?” Remind students to put their My Goals and Student Strategies for Success handouts in their notebook.