Making Early Campus Visits Count – tips for how to plan your campus visit

Campus visits are an important tool in encouraging 8th grade students to attend college. Use these tips to help plan your campus visit and allow students to view the visit as more than a day off from school.

Taking 8th grade students on a campus visit

- Encourages students to pursue education beyond high school
- Gives students the opportunity to identify their strengths and interests, and to identify degree programs that suit their career interests
- Allows students to think about what type of college will best fit their needs (large, medium, small, two-year, four-year, trade schools)
- Allows students to learn about the costs of college (scholarships, grants, and assistance)

Prepare students before the campus visit

- Discuss appropriate behavior, such as: listening attentively and respectfully to represent their school positively
- Have them identify careers that interest them and suit their strengths
- Have students develop a list of questions to ask while on the visit
- Emphasize dressing-up for the visit day

Arrange the campus visit

- Contact the college liaison to schedule the visit
- Select several dates before you call to allow for flexibility
- If feasible, invite parents to attend the campus visits with their student(s)
- Consider partnering with a fellow teacher to offer a content-based experience while on the campus visit, i.e., students visit a chemistry lab in conjunction with something learned in 8th grade science.
- Have specific ideas to suggest to the liaison, such as having someone from the college discuss:
  - The importance of education after high school
  - The most important things for this age group to be doing now to prepare for college
  - Admission requirements, including course requirements, GPA, and ACT scores
  - Cost of the college
  - Financial aid options
  - Types of degree programs
  - Other activities:
    - Classroom activity - a professor and college students working with the 8th grade students on a field-related, hands-on activity
    - Student Panel, with school alumni if possible
    - Campus Tour or Scavenger Hunt, including visiting the recreation or activity center
- Ask the college if they can provide lunch to students at a reduced cost
- Confirm your campus visit, parking and schedule of events
- Plan enough time for your students to truly experience the campus
The day of the visit
- Arrive on campus at the appointed time – don’t be late!!
- At lunch, ask students about their opinions and impressions of the college
- Help students ask their questions when on tour, if they are hesitant
- Have students pick up the college newspaper or other publications

After the campus visit
- Discuss with students what they learned on their visit
- Ask them to complete a post-visit evaluation:
  - What did they like or dislike about their experience?
  - How did the campus visit meet or change their expectations?
  - Could they see themselves as a student on that campus?
- Help them follow-up if they have additional questions or concerns
- Evaluate the experience from your perspective as a counselor/teacher
- Have students write thank you notes or emails to the people they met on the visit
- Follow up with the campus liaison about visit experience

How to pay for transportation to the campus visit
- Check with your school to see if there is an activity fund to cover all or a portion of the costs of the trip
- Check with your booster groups or your PTA/PTO to see if they would cover all or a portion of the cost of the trip
- Check with your principal to get permission to approach your school board and/or superintendent about covering all or a portion of the cost of the trip
- Check with your local chamber of commerce to see if there is a business willing to sponsor the trip