

D1. The Benefits of College



Introduction

This lesson will help students and families understand the benefits of higher education for individual students, their families and their communities. Understanding these benefits will increase students' self-esteem.

Learning Goals

- Students will understand the benefits of higher education.
- Students will understand the messages they are receiving at home and in their community about higher education.
- Students will hear and understand firsthand accounts of the benefits of an education.

Materials Needed

- Preview Activity Handout: *The Benefits of Higher Education* (and/or Web video or guest speaker)
- Lesson Handouts: *Why College?* and *The More You Learn, the More You Earn* from *Realizing the College Dream*
- Reflection Activity Handout: *I'm Excited about College*

Special Instructions

There are many ways you can prepare an impactful Preview Activity about the benefits of college. As always, we have included a handout that can be given out a few days before the in-class lesson. *The Benefits of Higher Education* handout helps students talk to their copilots about the benefits of college. Exercise care with this assignment — not all students will have a close relationship with someone who has attended college. Encourage those students to think broadly about whom they can speak to, and include yourself in that list. If the majority of your students cannot find someone who went to college to do the Preview Activity with, you might want to do this as an in-class activity and either be the person the students interview or bring in guest speakers. Another option is to pair students up with faculty and staff in the school to help them fill out the Preview Activity sheet.

Word Wall

Benefit: Something that promotes well-being; an advantage

Higher Education: Any education after high school

College/University: An institution of higher learning that offers facilities for teaching and research and is authorized to grant academic degrees

Communal: Of or relating to a community

In this lesson students might also encounter people who do not believe that college would benefit them or think that college is an achievable goal. One of your key tasks in this lesson will be to help give your students the tools to deal with that situation and ensure that they believe in the importance of college.

In lieu of or in addition to the handout, you may wish to show your students a streaming video from the Web that addresses this topic (for example, see www.firstinthefamily.org). Ideally, the video can be shown to the students the same day the handout is given. This will help make students conversant on issues they may be facing.

Finally, we strongly encourage you to bring in a guest speaker to talk to the students about the importance of college. Guest speakers, particularly those with the same background as the students, can make a tremendous impact. Guest speakers can be an excellent addition at many other points in the curriculum as well; this is a particularly ideal moment for this activity.

Preview Activity

This activity should be given 1-2 days prior to the in-class lesson. Explain to students that they will start a new lesson that requires them to gather information from their home or community and bring it to the classroom. (See handout.)

1. Distribute *The Benefits of Higher Education* and explain instructions to students. (See handout.)
2. As you begin the in-class lesson, have students share (as individuals or within small groups) what they discussed and learned in their Preview Activity.
3. You may wish to add value by collecting ideas generated and distributing them to students as a resource.

Activities

PART 1: THE BENEFITS OF COLLEGE (10 MINUTES)

1. Write the following statement on the board: "I believe I can reach my full potential ... for myself, for my family, and for my community!" Ask students to read the statement and share what it means to them and why it is important.
2. Discuss and review the Preview Activity.

PART 2: WHY COLLEGE? (35 MINUTES)

1. Give students the *Why College?* handout and go over each section with the students. You can also hand out *The More You Learn, the More You Earn* to further illustrate the financial benefits of college. Share personal experiences you feel comfortable discussing and talk about what you feel are the benefits of higher education. Refer students to additional resources in the References and Resources section of this lesson if they want to do additional research on their own.
2. Split up students into groups to discuss the benefits of college. Have them brainstorm additional benefits that come from higher education. You might want to give them large poster board or butcher paper to record their responses.
3. Have the groups report on their discussions. Compile their responses and create a handout that you can distribute to the class. Emphasize the creativity and intelligence of their responses.
4. Upon completion, you might want to discuss the following questions:
 - Have you ever had a conversation with your family about the benefits of education? If this was your first time, what did you learn?
 - After hearing the benefits of higher education, how many of you are ready to make a pledge to continue your education after high school?
 - How did having this conversation with your family help you with your plans to go to college?

Reflection Activity

1. Thank students for their participation in the lesson and talk about how important it is for them to share their discoveries with significant people in their lives.
2. Explain to students that this activity will allow them to share the information they explored at school with their copilot. In addition, the assignment will allow them to reflect on the topic a bit further.
3. Distribute *I'm Excited about College* and explain the instructions to students. (See handout.)

References and Resources

- Cushman, Kathleen. First in the Family: Advice About College from First-Generation Students – Your College Years. Providence: Next Generation Press, 2006.
- <http://www.firstinthefamily.org/>
- http://www.collegeview.com/benefits_of_a_college_education.html

Curriculum Standards

- Standards for the English/Language Arts: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
- National Standards for Social Studies Teachers:
 - Culture
 - Time, Continuity and Change
 - People, Places and Environments
 - Individual Development and Identity
 - Individuals, Groups and Institutions
- National Educational Technology Standards for Students: 3

See Appendix 3 for complete curriculum standards descriptions.