Strategies for Students in Rural Areas

**Postsecondary Education Expectations and Attainment of Rural and Nonrural Students**
(Rural Research Alliance partnered with Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest)

The study examined the reasons that rural and nonrural students in the REL Midwest Region reported for not expecting to pursue postsecondary education. Key findings include:

1) Approximately 90% of both rural and nonrural grade 10 students in REL Midwest Region states in 2002 expected to attend college, but the percentage who expected to attain a master’s degree or higher was higher among nonrural students than among rural students;

2) The reason that both rural and nonrural students reported most frequently for not expecting to pursue postsecondary education was financial concerns;

3) Rural and nonrural students had similar levels of postsecondary educational attainment by 2012;

4) Almost two-thirds of both rural and nonrural students had fallen short of their grade 10 postsecondary education expectations by 2012; and

5) Student characteristics, and to a lesser degree family characteristics and teacher expectations, rather than school locale, accounted for much of the variation in education expectations and attainment.

**College Talk and the Rural Economy: Shaping the Educational Aspirations of Rural, First-Generation Students**
(Peabody Journal of Education)

This study examines the messages that rural, first-generation students receive about the value of higher education. It shows that high school guidance counselors, college admissions officials, and the staff of community-based college aspirations organizations adopt a strikingly consistent message: they cite struggling rural economies in their argument for the necessity of a practical degree for all students, one that can be easily leveraged into a career. Despite noting broad parental support for this message, many participants also describe continued resistance from some rural families, a perception that may heighten the dilemma of rural college-going for students.
How to raise rural enrollment in higher education? Go local.  
(The Hechinger Report)

The Ayers Foundation based in Tennessee has been changing how people in some rural communities think about postsecondary education. The Ayers Foundation model is simple. It starts with putting a counselor — someone raised rural and connected to the community — in a local high school to help every student craft a career plan, then guide them through the tasks required to apply for — and pay for — a postsecondary degree to execute it. (This is in addition to the guidance counselors employed by the schools.) While many college-access programs focus on helping high-performers reach top schools, this model goes broad. The goal is to educate local students for living-wage jobs and for everyone to have a path. Another feature of the Ayers Foundation model is how personal and deep the help is. Finally, one strategy has been a key to success: Rather than highlight the deficiencies that feed the rural education gap, they focus on fortifying existing local relationships — a form of social capital — and bending them toward increased college-going.

Source: Indiana Commission for Higher Education

### College-Going Rate by Student Demographics, Indiana: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>% Enrolled in College within 1 year of HS graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21st Century Scholar</td>
<td>88%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free or Reduced-Price Meals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paid Meals</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban and Suburban</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Indiana Commission for Higher Education

### Strategies for Students with Disabilities

**Transitioning to Life After High School**  
(National Center for Learning Disabilities)

NCLD has identified three components that are important to the success of students with learning and attention issues as they enter college:

- Reducing stigma & promoting self-advocacy
- Encouraging resilience & persistence
- Providing access to information on accommodations
Access and Participation in Higher Education: Perspectives of College Students with Disabilities
(National Center for College Students with Disabilities)

The National Center for College Students with Disabilities (NCCSD) conducted focus groups with college students with disabilities across the country in order to better understand their experiences in higher education and establish priorities for the work of the Center. The results reported in this research brief reflect prominent findings identified by students across campuses. Common barriers identified by students included:

- Work with the disability resource office (e.g., unaware of services, difficulty navigating office procedures, inadequate accommodations, and lacking support for self-advocacy and disclosure skill development)
- Classroom and instructional environment (e.g., instructors who were uniformed about campus procedures, unresponsive to students, or challenged student requests for accommodations)
- Campus access and supports (e.g., physical barriers as well as gaps in services and programs across campus)
- Campus climate (e.g., negative interactions with peers, experiences of stigma related to disability, and the added work of addressing physical, curricular, and attitudinal barriers across campus)

Supports commonly identified by students included:

- The disability resource office (e.g., supportive interactions, easy procedures, and effective accommodations)
- Inclusive classrooms (e.g., informed instructors and positive interactions with faculty)
- The disability community (e.g., support from peers, and campus structures that promote community)
- Self-determination skills (e.g., acquired confidence for self-advocacy and claiming disability)

Recommendations to further support students with disabilities in colleges included:

- Continue work on the basic elements of campus access, including monitoring and improving physical accessibility across campus buildings, structures and spaces; training faculty on basic competencies for discussing and providing student accommodations; extending outreach and awareness of the availability of disability resources; and assuring accessibility of electronic information technology such as web pages and course management systems.
- Support campus-wide work on access, by improving the information, services, and practices related to students with disabilities across campus offices and services. Particular focus may be needed on campus counseling services, libraries, career development offices and teaching and learning centers.
- Reduce the work of being a disabled student on campus, by streamlining non-essential campus procedures and requirements for obtaining accommodations; using electronic management systems and other means of making information quick and easy to access; and actively engaging the campus community in discussion of access barriers.
- Promote a positive climate on campus, by including disability as an aspect of student diversity, providing training and resources to garner administrative support, infusing disability concepts into the academic curriculum, and supporting groups and structures that promote disability communities.

Success factors for older youth in postsecondary education include:

- **A Supportive Home Life** such as having a parent or caregiver who made them feel they would be successful and who understood and was able to help them with their learning and attention issues
- **A Strong Sense of Self-Confidence** such as tending to see the positive in situations and feeling comfortable taking the first step in reaching out to peers and adults
- **A Strong Connection to Friends & Community** such as feeling a sense of belonging to their school community and being comfortable taking the first step in making friends
- **Support for learning and attention issues early in life** such as having an IEP or 504 plan before high school

Source: National Center for Learning Disabilities
Strategies for Students in the Foster Care System

Take Me Higher: Helping Foster Youth Pursue Higher Education (Child Law Practice)

This article gives child advocates tips on helping foster youth pursue higher education. It covers key questions to ask foster youth, programs that help foster youth meet higher education goals, and financial aid sources.

Fostering Higher Education: A Postsecondary Access and Retention Intervention for Youth with Foster Care Experience (Child and Youth Services Review)

Most youth in foster care aspire to obtain higher education but face daunting obstacles in doing so. The Fostering Higher Education (FHE) is a comprehensive, structured, and evaluable postsecondary access and retention intervention composed of elements (professional educational advocacy, substance abuse prevention, mentoring) that are either evidence based or promising based on the scientific literature and their ability to address the outcomes of interest. This paper describes the development and youth usability and practitioner feasibility testing of the FHE intervention approach.

Gearing up for Summer and Fall: 11 Tips for Maximizing Support for Students with Experience in Foster Care and Homelessness in Higher Education During the Pandemic (SchoolHouse Connection and Youth Law Center)

This resource provides helpful tips for maximizing support for college homeless and foster youth. The tips are:

1. Help youth understand the COVID-specific financial aid available to them through their colleges and universities.
2. Help youth manage their money, including any additional assistance they may receive.
3. Help youth apply for and finalize their financial aid package.
4. Help youth ask for non-monetary assistance from their college or university.
5. Help youth access low cost internet.
6. Help youth who have experience in foster care access Chafee Funds and the Education and Training Voucher (ETV).
7. Help youth plan for the summer session.
8. Help youth get access to vaccines.
9. Help youth arrange their housing for the next semester (like Foster Youth to Independence Program Chafee room and board or housing programs specific for homeless youth)
10. Remind youth to check their college or university emails consistently over the summer so they do not miss important deadlines and information.
11. Help youth get connected with student support programs and points of contact.

What is ETV?
The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program is a federally funded-administered program designed to provide financial and academic support to youth who have aged out of the foster care system and who are enrolled in an accredited college, university, and vocational training programs. Students may receive up to $5,000 per academic year based on their cost of attendance and contingent upon available funding. Youth must enroll before their 21st birthday and may continue to receive support until the youth turns 26.

Funds may be used for the following:
- Tuition/Fees
- Room and Board (on campus or off campus)
- Books & Supplies
- Personal
- Transportation
- Child Care
- Medical Cost

What are the eligibility requirements for ETV?
Current and former foster care youth who meet the following criteria:

- Youth must have been in foster care or foster care will end on the youth’s 18th birthday and have not reached age 21.
- Youth was adopted or placed in a kinship guardianship from foster care on or after 16th birthday.
- Youth must have a high school diploma or High School Equivalency.
- Youth must be accepted into or enrolled in a Title IV, accredited college or vocational/technical training program.
- Youth must be a U.S. citizen or qualified non-citizen.

How do students apply for ETV?
For more information or to apply visit the ETV website or Foster Success.
Strategies for Students Experiencing Homelessness


To increase the awareness of post-secondary educators and education administrators of the issue of unaccompanied homeless youth, this brief will provide:

- A better understanding of unaccompanied homeless youth and the educational and other challenges they face;
- A summary of federal education legislation, including the McKinney-Vento Act and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, that gives unaccompanied homeless youth access to important educational supports;
- Samples of promising practices implemented by high schools, colleges, and universities to assist unaccompanied homeless youth in succeeding in college; and
- Additional resources for more information.

Tips for Helping Homeless Youth Succeed in College (SchoolHouse Connection)

This SchoolHouse Connection series is focused on helping youth experiencing homelessness succeed in college. They highlight best practices for supporting these students from institutions across the country in the following research briefs:

- Strategies for Transitioning from High School to College
- Strategies for Identifying Homeless College Students
- Strategies for Housing On and Off Campus
- Strategies for Accessing Financial Aid
- Strategies for Creating and Sustaining Campus-Based Programs
- Strategies for Parenting Students
- Supporting College Students Experiencing Homelessness During COVID: Dos and Don’ts

Making student status determinations for unaccompanied homeless youth: eligibility tool for financial aid administrators

This form is to be completed by a college financial aid administrator (FAA) who is evaluating a student’s eligibility for independent student status. It provides guidance to assist FAAs in making a determination if a student seeking independent student status as an unaccompanied homeless youth comes to the attention of a FAA, including when a determination by a local liaison or shelter is not available. Download Making Student Status Determinations for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: Eligibility Tool for Financial Aid Administrators:

- For the 2022-2023 FAFSA
- For the 2021-2022 FAFSA