

Middle School Students Report They Need Help Identifying Courses Required for High School Graduation and College Admissions

A national survey conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), Phi Delta Kappa International, and KnowHow2Go found some interesting results for middle school students that have important implications for counselors and school staff. One of the more striking findings is that students are overwhelmingly optimistic about successfully completing high school and enrolling in college, but also report that they are missing key pieces of information about graduation and college admission requirements.

A more pressing concern is that 83% of middle school students report that they have little or no information about graduation requirements, and 68% report that they have some or no information about how to select high school classes that will prepare them for college. Conversations with middle school students need to start as early as possible to make sure they are selecting the right courses and are aware of all possible opportunities to attend college.

Another finding is that among students who know as early as middle school that they are not planning on attending higher education, the vast majority (92%) report funding as the main deterrent. Early intervention is crucial to make sure students do not ignore pathways to higher education because they lack information about scholarships or loan programs that could better inform their decisions.

Of the concerns cited in the poll, many can be remedied by school guidance counselors and staff. Getting students focused on successful completion of high school and college readiness preparation should begin in middle school (ACT, 2006).

The full report, "A Voice From the Middle," can be found at http://www.principals.org/s_nassp/sec.asp?CID=1140&DID=55624. The survey was administered from February 14 through March 7, 2007 and responses were collected from 1,814 Grade 7 and 8 students. The reported percentages have a sampling error of +3.3 percentage points.

ACT. (2006). *Ready for college and ready for work: same or different*. Iowa City, IA. Author.

While 92% of middle school students report that they will attend college, few report knowing what courses to take to prepare.

Most (83%) middle schoolers report that they don't know anything (25%) or know a little (58%) about high school graduation course requirements. Only 25% of Grade 8 and 8% of Grade 7 students report that they know a lot about high school graduation requirements.

Of students who report they may not attend college, 92% report funding as the main deterrent.