

Reflecting on the College Visit

The **BIG** Idea

- How has the college visit affected my decision about going to college and my ideas about what I need or want from a post-secondary education?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up (5 minutes)
- II. Personal Reflection (10 minutes)
- III. Following Up on College Questions (10 minutes)
- IV. What I Want in a College (15 minutes)
- V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

PORTFOLIO PAGES:

- Portfolio page 22, College Visit Reflection
- Portfolio page 23, School Finder Results
- Portfolio page 24, Your Search Criteria

FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, School Finder Print Version

Computers

LCD projector

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Reflect on their college visit.
- Learn how to find answers to college-related questions.
- Identify criteria important to them in a college or technical school.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students reflect on their recent visit to a local college. They describe their overall reactions—what they found interesting and surprising, what they enjoyed most and least, and how the visit affects their post-secondary plans. As a follow up to the personal reflection, the facilitator addresses their concerns and questions in a whole-class discussion. In addition to answering some questions/concerns directly, the facilitator prompts students to brainstorm some of the many ways students may find answers to their questions. In preparation for future research, students consider what criteria are most important to them in a college or technical school and fill out a questionnaire on RUPrepareND.com to find schools that fit their interests.

PREPARATION

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- For the **Warm Up**, determine which students will work in pairs.
- For **Activity III: Following up on College Questions**, review the “personal” questions students submitted anonymously in the previous lesson. Categorize the questions by topic (e.g., roommate concerns, academic worries, etc.) for further discussion.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
 - **Portfolio page 23, School Finder Results**
 - **Portfolio page 24, Your Search Criteria**
- Make arrangements for the class to use the computer lab, and make sure RUPrepareND.com is accessible from students' computers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Going to college is a big transition, and as with all life changes, students are bound to have plenty of concerns and questions. Providing direct answers to their questions is helpful, but what will benefit them even more is recognizing the many services that colleges offer, at all points of their college career — from before they even arrive until long after they graduate. Resources include, but are not limited to:

- **Academic assistance** from professors, writing centers, teaching assistants, study groups.
- **Residential services**, like resident advisors (RAs) who address non-academic issues, such as roommate concerns.
- **College counseling services** help students cope with stress, relationship problems, depression, and other personal issues.
- **Health centers** provide medical services related to illness and injury.
- **Religious centers** provide clergy members for students to talk to and organizations that hold services and sponsored activities.
- **Financial aid office** explains financial aid options and strategies.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

For the **Warm Up**, if working in pairs is not manageable in your classroom, have students work individually.

Student discussion is encouraged in this lesson, so don't feel obliged to adhere strictly to the time allotted for each activity step.

Students who did not attend the college visit can pair up with those who did during the warm up. While the students who attended the trip fill out their **Portfolio page 22, College Visit Reflection**, have the students who didn't attend the trip write down at least three other questions they had about either the trip or college in general. These questions should be collected and reviewed in class with the questions from last week.

For **Activity IV, What I Want in a College**, you may wish to choose local colleges as examples of various characteristics (setting, size, entrance difficulty, etc.).

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. [When students are settled, divide the class into pairs for this first activity.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: I hope everyone enjoyed last week’s visit to [insert name of local college visited]. We’ll be spending the rest of the class talking about your reactions to the visit, and thinking about the ideas it’s given you about your future college plans. To start, I’d like to spend a few minutes talking about what you learned on the college visit.

2. [Have students turn to **Portfolio pages 18–21, College Visit Planner**. If you collected students’ planners at the end of the college trip, distribute them to students. Display the **College Visit Planner** on the overhead or LCD projector. Go through each section students were supposed to focus on during the college visit, asking students what they learned from the questions listed. Have students who did not attend the college visit record their peers’ answers on their portfolio pages.]
3. [In addition you may want to ask students to share what they found most interesting and surprising. Jot their ideas on the board or chart paper.]

II. Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

1. [Refer students to **Portfolio page 22, College Visit Reflection**.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Now that we’ve discussed some of your reactions to the college visit, I’d like each of you to take a few minutes to reflect on your experience in writing.

[Before students begin, read aloud each question on the handout, or have volunteers read them. Be sure they are clear on what each question is asking, for example, what’s meant by an “overall impression” in question 1. Direct their attention to question 5, and note that you’ll discuss their questions and concerns in the next activity. Circulate as students write, answering questions as needed and encouraging them to respond fully.]

III. Following Up on College Questions (10 minutes)

1. [This activity involves reviewing questions and concerns students submitted anonymously during the last lesson. You may include students’ responses to question 5 of **Portfolio**

page 22, College Visit Reflection in this discussion.]

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Deciding to go to college is a big and very exciting choice. With this decision comes many questions. I remember when I started college, I wondered if I could handle the workload and whether there was anyone to help me, should I need it. Upon researching, I discovered that my school provided academic support in the form of tutoring. The student tutors taught me how to take notes, study, and get through tons of reading. [NOTE: Please feel free to substitute your own example here.]

During the college visit last week, you may have found answers to many of your questions. For those still unanswered, let's discuss them, and brainstorm ways to find answers.

3. [Discuss specific answers to a few questions. Then remind students of other ways they can get their questions answered. For example, their high school counselor is a good resource, as are the many support services available on college campuses—from resident advisors (RAs) to financial aid officers.]
4. [Invite students to brainstorm other ways they can find answers to questions. Jot their ideas on the chalkboard. Here are some things the list may include: college website, current college students, recent alumni from the school.]
5. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** It is natural to have questions as you begin your college investigation. In fact, the more visits you go on, and the more you learn, the more questions you will have. By starting the college process early, you have plenty of time to find answers to your questions.

IV. What I Want in a College (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** When you think about college, do you picture yourself in a big city, or do you imagine being in a small town, where life focuses around the campus? Are you interested in a college that offers small, intimate classes, or is the idea of big lectures with many students more energizing to you? Maybe you want to go to a local college and live at home, or maybe you want to go away and live in a dorm? These are just a few of the many personal decisions you will make as you consider what kinds of colleges are just right for you. Thinking about these choices now will help you get ready for your college search during your junior and senior years.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** RUReadyND.com is a great place to find colleges and universities that match your interests. Using the **School Finder** feature, you can answer a few questions on the site, and it'll give you a list of schools with the things you're looking for. So let's sign in. [Note that students don't need to rule out a school they're interested in, just because it doesn't appear on their list.]
3. [Have students sign in to RUReadyND.com.]

[Ask them to click on the **College Planning** tab at the top of the page, and then on the **Explore Schools** link. They should then click on the the **School Finder** button, and then on **School Type**, which is listed under Key Facts on the left side of the screen. Students should check off Bachelor's degree programs and Associate degree programs before proceeding to the next section.

Students can now select additional characteristics from the list of choices along the left side of the screen. As a class, walk the students through the list of characteristics one-by-one to be sure that they know what each characteristic means. Discuss the following questions below before students select their answers:

- **LOCATION:** Tell students that they should consider the travel involved in going to schools far away from home. If students want to be able to go home for weekends, or for family members' birthdays, they may prefer to stay within their region. This does not mean that students should be discouraged from looking at colleges outside of their state or region, but students need to think about the pros and cons of a school's location. (Example, a student from North Dakota who wants to stay closer to home should check off either the Midwest or just North Dakota.)
- **SCHOOL SETTING:** Discuss the following vocabulary words below and explain each corresponding example.
 - **Major City:** Major cities and towns are referred to as urban areas, or areas with a population of 300,000 or more.
 - **Small/Medium City:** These cities and towns have a population of 75,000 to 299,999 within the metropolitan area. The area is approximately 15-25 miles in radius. These campuses are generally close to restaurants and shops, but still have campuses with green lawns and sports fields.
 - **Large Town:** These towns have a population of 25,000 to 74,999 within a 10-mile radius of the town.
 - **Small Town:** These towns have a population of 5,000-24,999 within a five-mile radius of the town. Cornell College in Mount

Vernon, IA is an example of a school in a small town.

- **Rural community:** This is an area far away from a city or large town with a population under 5,000. This area is generally thought of as a country setting. Rural campuses are generally what students may think of when they envision a typical four-year college. Often you will find green lawns with plenty of space to toss a Frisbee or a football around. However, these schools are often very far from major cities, so students who are used to living in a big city may feel isolated at these schools.
- **SCHOOL SIZE:** To give the students a frame of reference between a very large, a large, and a medium school, discuss each example for North Dakota:
 - **Extra Small:** Jamestown College: 967 Students
 - **Small:** Minot State University: 3,551 Students
 - **Medium:** 5,000 to 10,000 Students
 - **Large:** University of North Dakota: 11,139 Students
 - **Extra Large:** 15,000 to 20,000 Students
 - **Super-Sized:** Over 20,000 Students
- **ENTRANCE DIFFICULTY** (under the **Admissions** tab): Students do not need to understand the specific difference between each level of admissions difficulty, but some examples may be helpful. A school like Harvard or Princeton would be considered a “most difficult” school. They are very competitive and generally only take students with extremely high grades. If students seem unclear about which level to pick, tell them to leave all options blank.
- **TUITION** (under the **Costs and Financial Aid** tab): Tell students that even though some colleges can be quite expensive, they should check “Does not matter” in answer to the tuition question. Explain that you shouldn’t rule out an expensive school until you know what kind of financial help is available.
- **PROGRAMS/MAJORS OFFERED** (under the **Academics** tab): If the students already know their favorite career cluster, they should click “Show Programs” next to the appropriate cluster. They can then choose the major that they are interested in. If a student is undecided about what major they want to study, tell them to skip it.
- **SPECIAL ACADEMIC PROGRAMS** (under the **Academics** tab): Tell the students to skip this question unless they are familiar and interested in one of the options. For

example, if a student knows that he wants to be in the ROTC: Air Force, then he should check that option off.

- **INTERCOLLEGIATE SPORTS** (under the **Sports** tab): Tell students that if they play a particular sport for a school or club team they should review their choices under the **Sports** tab.
- **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES** (under the **Campus Life & Services** tab): Tell the students to skip this question unless they are familiar with and interested in one of the options. If a student is active in their theater department and wants to keep performing throughout high school and college, she should check off the drama/theater group box.

NOTE: If you are having your students complete the School Finder independently, tell them not to spend too much time on any question—they can always go back another time and revise their answers. Students can also choose to add any of the other characteristics listed, if time allows.

[When students have finished entering their criteria, ask them to click on See Your Matching Schools. This button appears near the bottom of all of the criteria selection pages.]

[Show students how the following functions can be used.]

- If you have no (or not enough) exact matches, click on the button labeled **See All Schools**. This button is located below your list of schools or, if you have no schools on your list, below your search criteria. To help remember what influences your choices, you can review your search criteria at the left side of the page.
 - To see how closely a school matches your criteria, click **Compare Your Selections** to the right of the school name.
 - If a school that the student hoped to see did not appear on the list, students can type the name of the school into the search box in the upper right corner of the list.
4. [Point out that their choices may change over the next two years, especially when they start to visit colleges, and that's OK. Remind them that starting now will help them down the road.]
 5. [Give them about 10 minutes to review and complete the questions. Once they have a list of schools, ask students to print the search criteria and list of schools by clicking

Print This in the upper right corner of the page. If printing is not available, ask students to record their list of schools on **Portfolio page 23, School Finder Results**. Students can record their search criteria on **Portfolio page 24, Your Search Criteria**. Note that the type of school will be two-year or four-year.]

6. [Tell students to save this search by selecting “Save Your Search” at the top right of the page. They should enter a name for their search (for example, local nursing programs or large, public schools in North Dakota) and then click **Save**. They can review this search in the future by signing in to RUPrepareND.com and returning to the School Finder tool.]

V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Congratulations! You’ve taken the first important steps towards going to college. Although it may feel like a whirlwind of information, the great thing is you still have two years to figure it out! And, you *will* figure it out! Next year, when you begin a more in-depth college search, you will already know how to find answers to your questions and have ideas about what’s most important to you in a college.
2. [Refresh students’ memories about “The First in Family” video clips from last lesson, specifically how uncertain the kids interviewed were about going to college. Remind students that each of those kids ended up having a wonderful, positive college experience. Make the point that it is perfectly natural to have some level of uncertainty and nervousness—it’s part of the process when you start something new.]

College Visit Reflection

Answer the following questions about your college visit.

Name of college: _____

Date visited: _____

How did your college visit affect your plans to attend?



1. What was your overall impression, or feeling, about this college? _____

2. Can you imagine yourself attending this college, or one like it? Why or why not? _____

3. What did you like best about this college? _____

4. What did you like least? _____

5. What would you like to know more about? _____

6. How will your visit affect your future plans? Will you apply to this college (or one like it)?
Why or why not? _____



What kind of colleges interest you? Use RUReadyND.com to begin your search.



School Finder Results

Use the “School Finder” in RUReadyND.com to find the undergraduate schools (two- and four-year colleges) that meet your needs. On each page, check the kinds of things you prefer — public or private school, big or small. The School Finder will create a list of possible schools.

Print out your list and put it in your portfolio, or copy your top choices here. An example has been done for you.

List **five schools** that were **exact** or **close to exact** matches:

Name of School	Type of School	City/State
<i>Bismark State College</i>	<i>2-year</i>	<i>Bismark, ND</i>
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____

List additional schools that interest you. You may include schools that were not on your list. (Do not include any schools listed above.)

6. _____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____

THE SCHOOL I AM RESEARCHING IS: _____

Your Search Criteria

To help you remember what influenced your choices, review your School Finder search criteria listed above your list of schools. Print out your list by clicking **Print This** in the upper right corner of the page and put it in your portfolio, or copy your criteria below.

1. Location: (If you remember the region you selected, record just that name below.)

2. School Type: _____

3. Public or Private: _____

4. Setting: _____

5. School Size: _____

6. Entrance Difficulty: _____

7. Tuition: _____

8. Special Academic Programs: _____

9. Extracurricular Activities: _____

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