

PPP Session Outlines

Session 1 – Introductions

1. Ice breaker – introducing group leader and members, where you are from originally, name, anything else you want to share.
2. Group norms and expectations – confidentiality, attendance, etc.
3. Purpose of the 8 sessions – to give you the tools you will need to help your child move forward with their educational path. Metaphor – learning to build a brick wall or prepare a soup. Even if you have never done it before, you can watch someone else do it, listen to their suggestions, learn how to use the tools, give it a try and get better each time.
4. In pairs, ask parents to share a little bit about their families and their high school aged children. If time permits, have a show of hands to learn how many kids they have, which schools they attend, etc.
5. Ask them to identify their hopes for their children – and perhaps what their children hope for their own futures.
6. Ask them to discuss any worries/concerns they have about those futures, and their ability to help their child get there.
7. Ask them to list some of the barriers they are currently aware of for helping their child get to college. You may write some of these barriers down if you wish, to show them again in the last session (help them see how far they have come). You can also ask them what supports or resources they know about at this point.
8. End with an encouraging talk about the key role parents play in the lives of their children – no one knows them as well as you, no one cares about their success as much as you, no one can encourage and motivate them as well as you. Whether you have been to college or not does not matter – you are still the most important person in helping your child identify their future dreams and find a way to get there. Parents have many strengths, and we can always learn to do some things better. You might feel you are able to be a motivator for your child, but are less certain if you can help them plan all the steps they need to take to get into college. That is part of what we will help you learn – planning, finding resources, overcoming challenges. All of those are things you can learn. Appreciate them for having the dedication and determination to come here and start the process, and for their persistence in working so hard to create a good life for their children in a new place.
10. If you want to have a brief activity that helps them figure out how much knowledge about college preparation they already have, and how much they may still be missing, we have a brief “quiz” they can take verbally or in groups.

11. Finally, give each family (not each individual) a binder and remind them to bring it back next week to get more handouts and information. There is a sheet in the binder that describes our learning goals for the group. We also usually start with providing the CFNC “Guia” in Spanish, a CFNC timeline of steps toward college in each grade (9-12), and a CFNC “don’t get hooked” flyer about financial aid scams. All of these things are available at no cost from CFNC and can be requested via their website. You may find other things on the website that are available in Spanish that you would like to provide, which is great!

Session 2 – There is a University for Everyone

1. Check in, welcome back, remembering names
2. Today’s topic: there is a university for everyone. Doesn’t matter what your salary is, what your child’s interests are, what job you have, what grades your child gets – there is a university for everyone. Some are very expensive, very competitive, some are very inexpensive and have “open” admissions. Some specialize in sciences, some have programs in education or law, some are known for arts and music. Some have brief programs like certificates or 2-year degrees, some have longer 4-year bachelor’s degrees, and some include graduate studies. You can find a university that matches what your child and your family needs, if you want to.
3. Look at CFNC Guia that shows map of NC colleges – emphasizing some are public/private, some are 2-year/4-year, some are large/small. Make sure these terms make sense to them and see if there are questions (CFNC Guia provided).
4. So, in order to find the university that best matches your child’s needs, we must know something about your child. Share with another parent what you know about one of your HS age children (interests, strengths, personality) – try to keep it positive! Sometimes we are too rough on our teen age children.
5. Communication is so important for learning about your child (handout).
6. Again, your role as parent is so important – this is not just the job of the schools to prepare your child academically, but your job to help guide them toward the option that is the best match for them. Does anyone know what a school counselor is? Although the school counselor does have the responsibility of helping students think about and prepare for their futures, don’t just assume those conversations are happening without checking. You are also allowed to schedule meetings with school counselor!
7. What are some challenges you see in helping your child determine their best path forward to future education or work? (for example, have you tried to go talk to

school counselor, did you need to request an interpreter, did you feel respected and understood?) What stories might they have to share here?

8. If there is time, see if they want to use CFNC website to connect interests to career titles, salaries, and educational preparation.
9. When there are challenges, we must always learn to look for supports and resources to meet them. Share a success story or ask them if they know someone who has gone to college and can be a role model. Remind them that feeling anxious or fearful is normal, but we can't let those fears paralyze and stop us. We can keep looking for ways to move forward.

Session 3 – Getting the most out of HS

1. Check-in, quick review of past topics, solicit brief stories of new things they have tried. Can ask for brief stories throughout this session if you want, since HS is what they are currently experiencing and trying to navigate successfully.
2. Today we will talk about how to help your child graduate from HS and be eligible to apply to a 4-year college if that is their goal. The 2 things are not exactly the same! School counselor is the person who helps your child select their classes every year and can keep them on track. The Guia lists UNC-system requirements for admission and current HS graduation requirements so they can see where the differences are. The community college system only needs a HS diploma or GED in order to be eligible to apply.
3. In addition to courses, there are many other opportunities in HS. Your child can earn credits toward college via AP courses, the College and Career Promise, early college, or other programs. School counselor is best source of info about these. Getting credits while in HS means having to pay for fewer credits in college. Any examples of friends who have taken advantage of these options?
4. Can also build leadership skills by participating in sports, extra curricular activities, clubs, music, arts, drama, volunteering, working for pay, etc. It can be difficult to arrange (transportation to and from activities, time away from work or family, etc.), but think together about ways to make it easier – maybe can volunteer with another friend who can drive? Maybe volunteer somewhere close to parent's work place or close to home where they can walk? Even just once a week is OK if they keep it going for a year or two – it shows they can accept responsibility.
5. Again, parents are so important – your advice helps to keep them on track. Sometimes their friends offer advice that is not very wise or helpful, and they need your help to think about what would be best for their futures. Children can also get discouraged or tired, so they need encouragement and help to keep their eyes on the goal, to keep planning and moving one step closer. How can you help your child?

6. Video of Carlos (one of Laura's students at UNCG) talking about his path from HS to community college to UNCG bachelor's degree to being enrolled in a master's program. We can give you access to this if you wish to show it. The bottom line is that it is not always easy, but with persistence we can keep moving forward. Their reactions to the video are often to criticize the parents of Carlos, but we can remind them that immigrant parents are doing the best they can, and sometimes making decisions based on what they used to know from home country, not the U.S.

7. If there is time, have them brainstorm what would be a good college for my child, if I wasn't worried at all about money/cost. Where would I love to see them go to school? What would be a good place to nurture them and help them grow?

Session 4 – Finding a university that fits my child

1. Our goal today is to use the CFNC website to explore some of the college or universities that you think might be good options for your children. If you have computers at home, you can set up a free CFNC account and continue searching later. Your child may have set up an account through their school. If there are any terms you don't understand, please ask! We want to make this less confusing for you, not more confusing!

2. We have focused on learning about our children, knowing them and their goals very well. We have a handout that talks about some of the options you and your child would need to discuss when selecting a college that is right for them (Prioridades de la Universidad). Some of the options include size of campus, 2-year or 4-year, private or public, more competitive or less so, options for areas of study, near home or further away, cost, etc.

3. Would you and your child agree about these options? Maybe each of you and your child could fill out the handout in a different color so you can compare your answers. Are there areas where you might be willing to let them "win" if you could "win" in other areas?

4. Let's look up information about some of the nearby colleges using CFNC – Forsyth Tech, Wake Forest University, Guilford Tech, Salem College, UNCG, Guilford College, any others? Allow them to understand some of the differences, but don't get too bogged down in every tiny detail and overwhelm them. This is a tool they can continue to use later and are just learning about now. Share the handout that connects a career title with what degree might be needed (examples of 2-year degrees and careers, 4-year degrees and careers).

5. Has anyone gone to visit one of these campuses? Seeing with your own eyes gives you a different perspective than looking at information on a screen. You can make an appointment to meet with Admissions officers, or you can just park your

car and walk around, see if you feel comfortable or not. May also use the CollegeBoard.org website if some parents want to see colleges outside of N.C.

6. CFNC also has a calculator that helps you understand your “expected family contribution.” We will talk more about financial aid another day, but I know many of you are thinking about the cost right now! We want to emphasize that very few families would pay the “full amount” of tuition and fees, and many families would qualify for some kind of grant, loan, scholarship, or other aid. Let’s try an example just so you will see that even very expensive universities like Wake Forest might not cost your family any more than other colleges. (NOTE: This could get complicated, so it might be better to try it yourself in advance and see if it is at a good level for the parents you will have in your group). The important point is that most families do not pay the “sticker cost” at a university.

7. What questions do you have? How might you be able to start a conversation with your child about some of these things? How are you feeling at this moment? Overwhelmed with new information? Worried about the future? Motivated to find out more? Excited that perhaps it is not impossible to do this? You have just started to explore a very new world, like taking a rocket to the moon! No wonder it is a little bit disorienting. You deserve credit for even getting on board!

Session 5 – Steps in the Admissions Process

1. Check in – how is everyone doing? We have completed half of the group now!

2. Here is a list of the things you and your child would need to organize or submit as part of the 4-year college application process. The handout in their binder also has each of these steps listed with space to write some notes afterward. To apply to a 2-year college or community college is a simpler process that we will discuss later. Some of these things might be obvious (HS grades), some of them might be new to you. What questions or concerns do you have about this list? Which things are unfamiliar? Which things seem challenging and like you might need to find support or resources to help? Be sure to mention fee waivers are available both for SAT and for college applications for people who receive free or reduced lunch program.

3. This is a shared responsibility between you and your child – they are becoming more mature and this is their college application, not yours. If you are worried about helping them write an essay in English, for example, remember that their English teachers can edit and correct any small errors, but you can do the important work of helping them organize their ideas in Spanish. You can make a calendar where you keep track together of important deadlines and which steps are already complete. You can remind them that the CFNC website has test questions to help them prepare for the SAT or ACT, or find a friend to come help them study for that test. You can use the common application to apply to several colleges at once. Focus on what you CAN do, not what you can’t do. Remember there are many resources to

help you – let’s name some of them now. School counselor, teachers, older cousins or friends, neighbors, CFNC website, etc.

4. Look together at the timeline of preparation (bookmark with info for grades 9-12). Just getting a calendar and putting important deadlines on it would be a huge help to your child, as sometimes teenagers are not great at organizing themselves. Remember that you can only add one brick at a time when you build a wall, so only take on one task at a time from this list and don’t become overwhelmed by the idea of having to build a whole wall at once. If you get stuck and don’t know the answer to a question, have a few resources you can consult (CFNC website, school counselor, older cousin who went to college, someone from this group, etc.)

5. Again, the admission process for a community college is completely different – look at Forsyth Tech website for an example.

6. If your children are younger (like 9th grade), it is good to review these steps now so you have the big picture, and follow the appropriate timeline for your family.

7. Can mention policies around undocumented students and college admission as well, check with the parents to see if they feel hopeful or still worries.

8. Questions? Next 2 weeks we will address the financial aid topic, very important.

Session 6 – Financial Aid overview

1. Let’s start with an acknowledgement that this can be a very stressful topic for almost any family, and that it is hard to do your best thinking when you are worried and anxious. Remind them of their own stress reduction techniques like praying, calling a family member on the phone, taking a walk, listening to music, working with your hands, etc. If you feel your worries about money creeping up on you, use these strategies!

2. Paying for college is like making an investment – it means less money in our pockets today, but it could mean more money in the future when kids can get better paying jobs and be more able to take care of their families.

3. First we have to be sure we understand the terminology of financial aid so we are ready to make good decisions about it. CFNC Guia has definitions of scholarships, grants, loans, work study – discuss. Also review CFNC handout “no te dejes enganchar,” let them know there are some scams to avoid.

4. Handout – typical costs associated with a 4-year college (pie chart). Not just tuition, but fees, room and board, books, transportation, personal expenses, etc. Make sure these categories make sense to them – may be new terms. Already we can see ways to reduce costs, if students live at home, etc.

6. The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is the form you use if the student is a US citizen or permanent resident to see how much government aid you qualify for. The student must be a citizen to file this, a parent does not necessarily need a SSN. If you enter all zero's for the parents' SSN (may need to do so several times), the form will eventually let you continue. Here is a FAFSA in Spanish for you to look at, so you will know the kind of information they will ask for. After you submit this, you receive a summary letter that asks you to verify is all of the information correct, and will indicate how much aid you would qualify to receive. You don't have to accept all of it! You could accept the scholarships and grants and only a portion of the loans, for example.

7. Handout – “sticker price” for one year of being a full time in-state student at some area colleges, including Forsyth Tech, Wake Forest, UNCG, and Guilford College. Note differences between private and public, 2-year and 4-year, in-state and out-of-state, etc. Most importantly, very few people ever pay this “sticker price,” so don't let it scare you!

8. If no one in your household is a US citizen, you can still look for private sources of financial aid. Most school counselors have a huge binder full of scholarship sources and all it takes is a little time and effort to look through it and see which ones you might qualify for. There might be a scholarship for students who are bilingual and plan to study health care related fields, for example. There might be a scholarship for “minority” students who want to be engineers. There might be a scholarship for residents of Forsyth County who play a sport, or an instrument, or attend a particular church, or whose parents work for a particular company. This is a job for your child, to look for this information at school. There are also websites (handout), but that would be a larger field, harder to search, but worth it if you are motivated! Take a moment to briefly visit NC Hispanic College Fund, Univision's scholarship and Crosby Scholars websites. thencshp.org/programs/nc-hispanic-college-fund/

9. So, just to summarize, it may not cost your family any more to send your child to Wake Forest than to send them to Forsyth Tech. For undocumented students in particular, private colleges can be much more flexible in awarding scholarships regardless of legal status. At public colleges, most undocumented students will pay the “out of state” tuition rates, which are much higher. If your student is undocumented, please know that you will still be asked to verify your family finances before you can receive some need-based scholarships, so you could fill out the FAFSA on paper (not submitting online to the government) just as a way to show universities how much you would likely qualify to receive.

10. Let's brainstorm some ideas for reducing the costs of going to college. We talked before about earning college credits while in high school, and we mentioned living at home. Kids can save money from part time jobs and put it in a college savings account, even if it is hard for parents to save money while they are trying to pay for daily food, shelter, utilities, etc. It is possible to start at a 2-year college, take the “college transfer” curriculum, and later transfer to a 4-year college and finish a

bachelor's degree. What other ideas do you have? The important thing is that we keep adding one more brick into our "wall" of college funds, or one more ingredient into the soup, each little bit counts. How are people feeling now, a little more hopeful, a little less stressed?

Session 7 – Review Financial Aid material and any other questions

1. We talked about having a positive mental attitude last week, and ways to be creative in saving money for college. Let's review the financial aid material and any other section that we covered previously, to make sure you get your questions answered. Also continue to remind them of their supports, resources, options to get answers when they are feeling stuck.
2. Look at College Board website, CFNC web site, financial aid handouts, etc.
3. You have the option to combine the session 8 graduation ceremony with this session 7, if the review does not take the entire amount of time.

Session 8 – Graduation!

1. We may consider a guest speaker if you have time to organize it earlier in the group. Latino students who have graduated from your school and gone to college would be an idea, or Spanish speaking school counselors if we can find any. If parents are interested in having a potluck meal, that would be great.
2. Have a group go-around about something new they learned here? A question they still have? A step they can take in the next month to keep moving forward with college preparation? If you wrote down barriers and supports during the first week, now is a moment you could bring that back and ask them if anything has changed.
3. Remind them that they are now an informed community, a caring and supportive community, and that they can look to each other for help around these topics. PPP will continue to provide these groups in Forsyth county, if they have friends they would like to refer to the next group (PPP website). Do they want to share contact info with other group members, in order to continue offering support?
4. Appreciation – there are so many wonderful, caring, courageous, and dedicated parents in this room. You should feel very proud of yourselves for coming week after week in order to learn something new and be ready to help your children with this important task. We can print and bring "certificates of completion" to help honor their commitment to the group and the fact that they attended 6 or more sessions.