

High School Counselor Meetings About College, College Attendance, and Parental Education

DATA POINT

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This Data Point uses the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09), a national study of more than 23,000 ninth-graders and their school counselors in fall 2009. Student sample members answered surveys between 2009 and 2016. Sample members reported on whether the student met with a counselor about college during the 2012-13 school year (most students' 12th grade year).

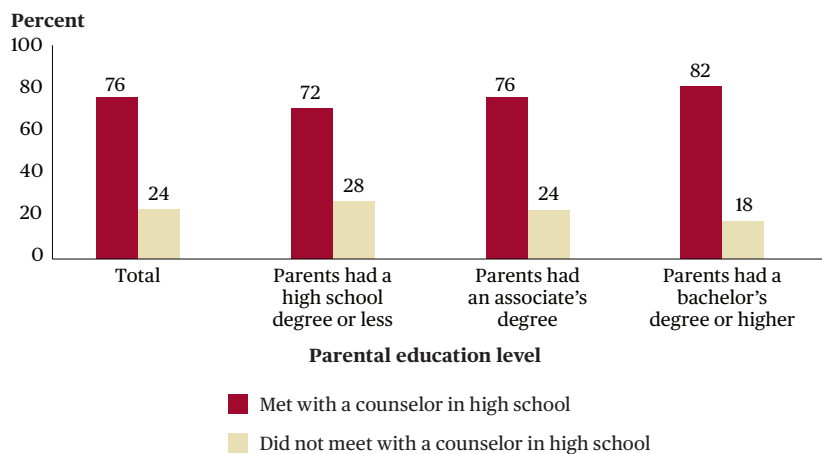
Many factors affect students' decisions to apply to postsecondary education (referred to as college in this Data Point). Some of these are income, school engagement, and coursework.¹ High school counselors may help students choose colleges and apply to them. Students who meet with a counselor about college could be more likely to attend college.² Students whose parents did not attend college (first-generation college students) enroll in college at lower rates than peers whose parents earned a college degree.³ Counselors may help potential first-generation college students plan for college. This Data Point compares high school students whose parents had not earned a college degree to those whose parents earned associate's degrees or higher. The report does not indicate a causal relationship between meeting with a counselor and college attendance; further research is needed into the underlying mechanisms.⁴

What percentage of high school students met with a counselor about college? How does this vary by parental education?

Around 47 percent of 2009 ninth-graders were potential first-generation college students, whose parents had not earned a college degree ([supplemental table 1](#)). Students whose parents did not hold a college degree met with a counselor at a lower rate than students whose parents had completed college. **Figure 1** shows that 72 percent of students whose parents did not hold college degrees met with a counselor, compared to 76 and 82 percent of students whose parents held associate's degrees and bachelor's degrees or higher, respectively.

Students whose parents had a high school degree or less met with a counselor at a lower rate than students whose parents earned an associate's degree or bachelor's degree or higher.

FIGURE 1. Meetings with high school counselors: Percentage of students who met with a counselor about college in 2012-13, by parental education level



NOTE: High school or less includes high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED). GED is an alternative path to attaining a high school credential. Respondents who did not know whether they met with a counselor are excluded from the analyses. These represent approximately 8 percent of weighted cases.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09) Base year, First Follow-up, and 2013 Update.

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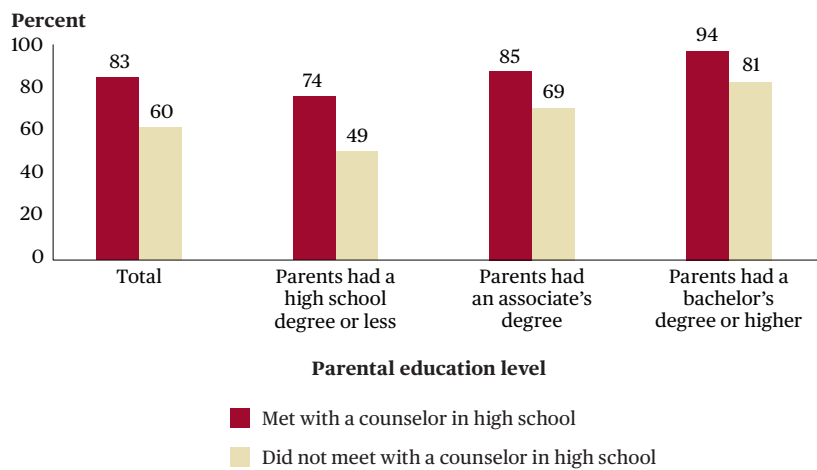
Did college attendance rates vary by meeting with counselors in high school and parental education?

About 77 percent of students attended college within 3 years after graduation (table 2). Eighty-three percent of students who met with a counselor had attended college, compared to 60 percent of those who did not (Figure 2).

About 74 percent of students whose parents did not have a college degree who met with a counselor about college attended college. The college attendance rate was 49 percent for students whose parents did not have a college degree and who did not meet with a counselor. This is a difference of 25 percentage points between students who met with a counselor and those who did not. For students whose parents held

an associate's degree and who met with a counselor, 85 percent had attended college. This is higher than the 69 percent college attendance rate of students whose parents held associate's degrees and who did not meet with a counselor. This is a difference of 17 percentage points. Moreover, for students whose parents held bachelor's degrees or higher and who met with a counselor, 94 percent had attended college. This is higher than the 81 percent college attendance rate of students whose parents held bachelor's degrees or higher and who did not meet with a counselor.

FIGURE 2. Counselor meetings and college enrollment: Percentage of students who attended college within 3 years of high school graduation, by parental education level and whether students met with a high school counselor about college in 2012-13



NOTE: High school or less includes high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED). GED is an alternative path to attaining a high school credential. Respondents who did not know whether they met with a counselor are excluded from the analyses. These represent approximately 8 percent of weighted cases.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09) Base year, First Follow-up, 2013 Update, and Second Follow-up.

Endnotes

¹ See, for example, Fraysier, K., Reschly, A., and Appleton, J. (2020). Predicting Postsecondary Enrollment With Secondary Student Engagement Data. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 38(7), 882-899.

² Tang, A.K., and Ng, K.M. (2019). High School Counselor Contacts as Predictors of College Enrollment. *Professional Counselor*, 9(4), 347-357.

³ Cataldi, E.F., Bennett, C.T., and Chen, X. (2018). *First-Generation Students: College Access, Persistence, and Postbachelor's Outcomes* (NCES 2018-421). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

⁴ Users are encouraged to access HSL:09 and conduct their own analyses via the NCES DataLab: <https://nces.ed.gov/datalab>.