Facilitating Long-term Improvements in Graduation and Higher Education for Tomorrow (FLIGHT)

Large numbers of qualified students do not apply to and enroll in college. Yet, earning a college degree is one of the primary pathways for economic success and is increasingly required for good jobs and high wages. \(^1\) A number of programs and practices aim to improve college readiness and enrollment, including Take Stock in Children's® (TSIC's®) Facilitating Long-term Improvements in Graduation and Higher Education for Tomorrow (FLIGHT) program. FLIGHT provides mentoring, scholarships, and additional support services to help disadvantaged middle and high school students stay on track for graduation, apply to college, and enroll in college. FLIGHT students also have access to college transition and retention services in their first three semesters of college. This What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) report, part of the WWC’s Transition to College topic area, explores the effects of the FLIGHT program on student success. The WWC identified six studies of FLIGHT, and one study met WWC standards.

What Happens When Students Participate in FLIGHT?

The evidence indicates that implementing FLIGHT:

- may increase the number of students who enroll in college
- may result in little or no increase in high school students’ attendance
- may result in little or no increase in high school students’ GPA

Findings on FLIGHT from the available research that met WWC standards are shown in Table 1. For each student outcome reviewed by the WWC, an effectiveness rating, the performance of the FLIGHT intervention group relative to the comparison group, and the number of studies and students that contributed to the findings is presented.

### Table 1. Summary of findings on FLIGHT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Effectiveness rating</th>
<th>Average performance (study findings)</th>
<th>Evidence meeting WWC standards (version 3.0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College access and enrollment</td>
<td>Potentially positive effects</td>
<td>Intervention group: 97% enrolled</td>
<td>Comparison group: 83% enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school attendance</td>
<td>No discernible effects</td>
<td>Intervention group: 12.37 absences</td>
<td>Comparison group: 12.45 absences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General high school academic achievement</td>
<td>No discernible effects</td>
<td>Intervention group: 3.90 GPA</td>
<td>Comparison group: 3.95 GPA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Note: Average performance values (study findings) are generated by one analysis conducted for each outcome, as reported by Philp (2005). These outcomes include enrollment in college the first semester after graduating high school (college access and enrollment), number of absences in the third year of the intervention (high school attendance), and weighted grade point average (GPA) in the third year of the intervention (general high school academic achievement). See the Intervention Report for details on the study results that contributed to these findings. The effects of FLIGHT are not known for academic achievement or attendance in middle school, college readiness, staying in, progressing in, or completing high school, attendance, credit accumulation, or academic achievement in college, college degree attainment, and, labor market participation/success.
Based on findings from one study that met WWC evidence standards, the effectiveness rating for the college access and enrollment outcome is potentially positive effects, indicating that there is evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence. The percentage of students enrolling in college in the fall following high school graduation was 97 for the FLIGHT group and 83 for the comparison group. This finding is based on 180 students. The effectiveness rating for the high school attendance and general high school academic achievement outcomes is no discernible effects. These findings are based on 241 and 240 students, respectively.

### How is FLIGHT Implemented?

The following section provides details of how FLIGHT was implemented. This information can help educators identify the requirements for implementing FLIGHT, and determine whether those implementation requirements would be feasible in their districts. Information on FLIGHT presented in this section comes from the study that met WWC evidence standards (Philp, 2015) and from correspondence with the developer. Information on TSIC® was gathered from TSIC®’s website.

- **Goal:** To help low-income middle school and high school students stay on track for graduation, apply to college, and enroll and succeed in college.

- **Target Population:** To be eligible for FLIGHT, a student must (1) be in middle or high school grades; (2) be eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; (3) have a minimum 2.0 GPA and no Ds or Fs for the previous year; (4) be performing at grade level or above in reading and math as indicated by standardized testing; (5) have no out-of-school suspensions for the prior year and no more than six incidents of in-school suspensions for the prior year; (6) have no more than 10 unexcused absences in the previous year; and (7) be attending a public school. Students' parents also must agree to adhere to TSIC®’s policies.

- **Method of Delivery:** FLIGHT offers students individualized assistance and group workshops during the school day from volunteer mentors, student advocates, and, in one study site, College Enrollment and Retention Specialists.

- **Frequency and Duration of Service:** Students who continue to meet eligibility requirements can participate in FLIGHT for up to eight years, from grade 6 through the first three semesters of college. See Table 2 for details on the frequency in which individual service components were delivered.

- **Intervention Components:** The FLIGHT intervention adds several components to the TSIC® model, as noted in Table 2.
Table 2. Components of FLIGHT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key component</th>
<th>FLIGHT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer mentors</td>
<td>Students meet with trained adult volunteer mentors in school for a minimum of 15 sessions per year for at least 30 minutes per session. These sessions typically focus on identifying needs, personal growth and development, educational planning, supporting academic success, and career planning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Student advocates/case managers | Every student is assigned a student advocate, an adult TSIC® staff member that serves as a case manager. The student advocate works closely with volunteer mentors and school staff to make sure students are on track academically. FLIGHT includes more intensive academic, attendance, and behavioral monitoring than TSIC® and includes:  
  - College Access and Success Meetings to review progress toward graduation and college enrollment, one to four times per year for 15-30 minutes each.  
  - Advocacy Meetings to monitor students’ grades, attendance, and satisfaction with his/her mentor, four times a year for 15 minutes each. Student advocates address any academic or behavioral issues that arise by organizing meetings among teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and mentors. One FLIGHT study site also includes a College Enrollment and Retention Specialist who coordinated workshops and college tours. |
| Florida Prepaid Scholarships | Students who fulfill FLIGHT requirements receive a two-year scholarship to college, or they may use their scholarship funding to attend vocational training. |
| Continued mentoring    | Students have access to college transition and retention services in their freshman year of college. One FLIGHT study site includes a College Enrollment and Retention Specialist who coordinated post-graduation activities. |
| Workshops              | FLIGHT adds workshops to the TSIC® model. Student advocates provide students (and parents) with workshops that cover a range of topics such as goal setting, study skills, and college preparation and applications. Students in grades 7-10 participate in three workshops per year, which last from one to four hours each. Students in grades 11-12 participate in six workshops per year, which last from one to four hours each. |
| Student detail reports | At the end of each school year, parents and teachers are provided a one-page snapshot of the student’s grades, standardized test scores, attendance, office referrals, program participation, and whether the student is on track to graduate high school. |

What Does FLIGHT Cost?

The cost of FLIGHT is not reported in the one study reviewed (Philp, 2015), and no cost information on FLIGHT was available on the TSIC® website. However, the WWC identified a number of cost components from the intervention description in the study’s report. This preliminary list of costs is not designed to be exhaustive; rather, it is designed to provide educators an overview of the major cost components of implementing FLIGHT.

- **Personnel Costs**: Schools that implemented FLIGHT conducted one 2-hour mentor training, one 1-hour staff training, and nine hour-long workshops for staff each year. Student advocates/case managers were volunteers and required only training costs. Student advocates were hired by TSIC® and embedded within the school.
- **Facilities Costs**: Schools needed dedicated space to accommodate meetings between students and their mentors and student advocates/case managers during the school day. Space was also needed for workshops.
- **Equipment and Materials Costs**: Information on equipment and materials costs is not reported.
- **Costs Paid by Students or Parents**: Students and parents were responsible for transportation costs to workshops and for college costs not covered by the FLIGHT scholarship.
- **In-Kind Supports**: FLIGHT received in-kind services from volunteers and through private foundations and community agencies.
- **Sources of Funding**: College scholarships and student services were funded in a public-private funding model. FLIGHT received funding from corporate, foundation, and private donations, which were matched by the Florida Prepaid College Foundation funded by the Florida Legislature.
In What Context Was FLIGHT Studied?

The following section provides information on the setting and participants involved in the one study of FLIGHT that meets WWC evidence standards. This information can help educators understand the context in which the study of FLIGHT was conducted, and determine whether the program might be suitable for their setting.

WHERE THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

1 study, 241 students in 42 middle and high schools in four districts in Florida

- 1 urban district, 3 rural districts

RACE

- 80% Minority
- 20% White

ETHNICITY

- 47% Hispanic
- 53% Non-Hispanic

FREE & REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH: 100%

GENDER: 65% Female 35% Male

GRADERS

PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 PS

Grade 6–Postsecondary (PS)

LEARN MORE

Read more about the FLIGHT intervention and the studies that are summarized here on the Intervention Report webpage.

ENDNOTE