

Naviance: A Complete College and Career Readiness Tool

Mehnaz I. Kafray

Brighter Horizons Academy

Author Note

Mehnaz Kafray, College Guidance Counselor, Brighter Horizons Academy

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mehnaz Kafray, College Guidance Counselor, Brighter Horizons Academy, Garland, Texas 75044.

Contact: [mehnaz@bhaprep.org](mailto:mehnaz@bhaprep.org)

### Abstract

College and career readiness encompasses skills and goals that are necessary for the success of our students, but it is a personal journey that needs to be individually customized for each student. Naviance is a comprehensive tool that contains student assessments, SAT/ACT prep, career matching, credit tracking, personalized goal setting, college and career readiness modules, and a central location for counselors to keep track of college applications, transcripts, and recommendation letters. Naviance walks the students step by step through self-discovery, creating goals, and finding the right career, major and college to meet those goals. For schools, this is an excellent way to ensure all students are being catered to. For counselors, it is much easier and effective to individualize counseling with the use of Naviance. Plus, it is easier to track student progress and make sure all are on track to graduate. Naviance has created a strong resource that benefits students, counselors, schools, and parents.

*Keywords:* college and career readiness program, submitting college applications

### Naviance: A Complete College and Career Readiness Tool

The focus on college and career readiness skills in recent years has put a spotlight on high schools across America. What does it mean to be college and career ready? How are schools preparing students for success in the classroom, in college, and in their future careers? How is it possible for schools to cover the skills and what is the most effective way to do it? Who should be held accountable? How is a counselor supposed to manage her time to include individualized plans but also keep track of all aspects of the college application process? For many schools, counselors are still doing it by hand and very little resources. Naviance is the all-inclusive program that will cover a school's college and career readiness goals.

#### **Statement of Problem**

Preparing students for college requires much more than a strong academic program. Designated counselors are crucial in facilitating the college-going process for students and for ensuring a quality college readiness plan is accessible to each student. Although some schools assign this task to a person who wears multiple hats in the school, it does require multiple full-time counselors before great results are seen. Either way, whether there is one counselor or four in the school, the department comes with its own challenges. The following are obstacles to the success of a solid college guidance program particularly found in Islamic and/or private schools.

1. Many Islamic schools are working to cement their place amongst the other educational institutions that parents and students have the option of attending. As the saying *first impressions last forever*, families (both potential and current) are only able to judge the worth of a school based on what they can see upfront. Schools at this stage of development are focusing more on the face of the school and programs offered.

2. Schools have the constant pressure of raising student achievement. How are they performing compared to state testing statistics from other schools? With a limited budget, most resources are put into the classroom instead because it has a direct impact on raising the quality of a school.
3. Many College and Career Guidance Counselors do not attain the position because they chose to major in it in college. They come from many different walks of life and professions and usually train themselves. Though resources for counselors has significantly increased in the past few years, the profession is still unregulated. This leaves room for counselors to do what they think is best. A comprehensive training program that covers the A to Z of College and Career Counseling is much needed.
4. Most counselors do not have designated instructional time with students. This poses a problem for counselors trying to retrieve documents, have career exploration conversations, and helping students organize themselves for the college application process. Some students take the initiative to go to the counselor's office to ask questions they come across, but the majority of students will not take a counselor seriously unless it is in a designated setting.
5. The number of tasks a counselor is responsible for each student seems impossible to track. Oftentimes counselors use Microsoft Excel or Word to keep up with their data and tasks. Though these programs are great for creating reports, they are lacking in many crucial college guidance related tasks and topics that need to be covered with high schoolers before they go off to college.
6. College Guidance encompasses college applications, college visits, career search and exposure, student strength assessments, goal setting, tracking transcripts and letters of

recommendations, resume writing, high school credit tracking, SAT/ACT guidance, scholarship searching, financial aid applications. Multiply each of these with each student and the task becomes too big for one counselor to manage and accurately keep track of.

7. The journey of the graduating class is the bread and butter of schools. The student is the product that dozens of educators work tirelessly to mold so that they will have the best chance at success in their post-secondary journey. The counselor brings all the pieces together and sets each student on an individualized pathway. No two students are the same. Even if they're planning on having the same career, the journey to get there is personalized for each and every student. This requires time, years of building relationships with students, information and data, and a gathering of data from previous graduating classes. Keeping track of each personalized plan is a challenge in itself. And unless a school is able to keep a counselor for many years to have the time to develop relationships with the students, having a new counselor come in every few years impacts the consistency and building of the program.
8. Graduation Day is the announcement of overall school success. Students walk across the stage after completing the required graduation credits and news of which colleges the graduates are attending spreads. This is a joyous day that comes with high stress for the guidance office. Each student is celebrated for their accomplishments and mistakes are unacceptable. Yet, most counselors are doing much of their work manually without the proper resources to help them automate the process. A solid program is needed to lessen the likelihood of a mistake being made on Graduation Day.
9. To bring quality to the college preparation program, many counselors piece together free resources supplied by the state or national organizations to make the best program they

can. Oftentimes these programs are not compatible and not comprehensive. Quality programs exist but they require funding.

## **Methods**

### **Student Assessments**

**MI Advantage.** Students answer 72 questions and then find out their intelligence strengths and challenges. Using the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, nine intelligences are assessed. They are the Bodily-Kinesthetic, Existential, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Musical, Naturalist, and Spatial. ("The Nine Multiple Intelligences", 2018). Schools are given practical advice for differentiating instruction and they can use this information to better serve their student population.

**Learning Style Inventory.** This assessment covers sixteen different areas which are all categorized into four general topics: immediate environment, emotionality, sociological needs, and physical needs. Students gain a better understanding of their personal preferences in regards to their own specific learning style. This information can be used to enhance study habits and overall performance for students. ("Learning Style Preferences", 2018)

**Do What You Are.** The results of this assessment describe the students' personality in four categories: Introversion vs Extroversion, Sensing vs Intuition, Thinking vs Feeling, Judging vs Perceiving. Each category is expanded upon by listing the strengths and limitations in each area and then links it to careers that build upon those strengths. ("Do What You Are® 2.0", 2016)

**Strengths Explorer.** The Strengths Explorer assessment covers ten talent themes and then narrows it down to the student's three strongest categories. Themes assessed are: Achieving, Competing, Dependability, Future Thinker, Presence, Caring, Confidence, Discoverer, Organizer, and Relating. Once the top three themes are identified, the student is given an explanation of

each one, along with a detailed report and then action items so students can build on these strengths. Furthermore, these strengths are linked to related career pathways.

### **Career Clusters**

Career pathways are created based on the results of the Strengths Explorer Assessment. Students are able to see careers relating to each of the three themes they performed in. Each career pathway further leads to an overview of the career, the employment outlook, credentials needed, related careers, related majors, and a plan of study. Students are able to save the careers they are interested in for future reference since there are so many to explore.

### **College Search**

College searching and lookup is linked to the career clusters. Once students narrow down their career choices, they are able to see the related credentials and majors to qualify for the career. After narrowing down which major(s) they need, they are led to a list of colleges that offer that major. Students are then able to click on each university to learn all about them. College information includes average net price, graduation rate, acceptance rate, deadline information, an overview of student life, residential life, a breakdown of the student body and academics. Students are able to save their favorite universities for future reference, request information from the college, send a message to the admissions counselors, or even apply! They are also led to the university's social media sites, information about athletics, financial aid and scholarships, and how to visit the campus.

### **Test Preparation**

Naviance offers test preparation for the SAT, ACT, and AP subjects complete with flashcards, lessons, practice questions, practice test questions, practice tests, and instructional

videos. The study material is up to date with the current version of each test and the preparation is intended to be engaging for teenagers. ("Naviance Test Prep Overview ", 2016)

### **College Application Manager**

This part of Naviance is the most helpful for counselors. Naviance allows for counselor's to be up to date on student applications. Counselors can see who has applied to which schools, the method in which they applied (whether it's through CommonApp or directly to the institution), the status update once the student reports it, and which documents the counselor has submitted for each school. Since Naviance is a program recognized by universities across the nation, sending documents becomes seamless.

### **Transcript Request Manager**

Students request transcripts directly through Naviance. The counselor is then able to view all of the requests on a single page and his/her status for each one. Transcripts are sent through Naviance simply by uploading the transcript and clicking one button. These electronic transcripts are secure and official. Counselors do not need to waste time and money on envelopes, stamps, print-outs, finding addresses, and sealing it officially. This is a huge time saver.

### **Recommendation Letters**

Students are also able to request recommendation letters through Naviance. These requests are sent to teachers and counselors. Teachers who receive these requests are able to send their letters electronically directly through Naviance. This keeps the letters confidential and also saves time, money, and the hassle of dealing with envelopes and stamps.

### **Scholarships**

Through Naviance, students have access to a national scholarship search. They are able to input their own information so the search can narrow down the scholarships that apply to them. Counselors can also add scholarships to the list and recommend scholarships to specific students.

### **Enrichment Programs**

Students are able to search for a variety of enrichment programs to attend in various categories. There are about two dozen enrichment program categories that they can choose from to narrow down their search. Information regarding internships, camps, summer programs, and leadership opportunities are posted for students to explore and apply to.

### **Student Planning- courses and credit tracker**

A large part of a counselor's responsibility is to track the completion of graduation requirements. With most schools recording semester grades onto the transcript, keeping track of two grades per class per student throughout their high school career can be daunting. Naviance allows for schools to import grades and completed credits into the program for students to see whether they are on track to graduate or not. For schools who offer different academic tracks or variation in classes, graduation plans can be created

### **Curriculum**

Naviance has a curriculum catered to students in each grade level from sixth to twelfth grade. Students cover topics within the following themes: assessment, self-discovery, career planning, success skills, support network, financial planning, and college planning. These modules are self-paced. Students have a variety of activities to do within the modules. Counselors even have extension activities they can do to build on whichever module the students are on. Students are able to set goals. Counselors are able to view all responses from students.

### **Contacting students**

Counselors can post announcements, discussions, send messages to students, and post documents. A list of important links that would help students through the college application process is also available. This makes it even easier for counselors to contact students directly from Naviance.

### **Data tracking and collecting**

Naviance collects all kinds of data that schools can use for various things. Counselors are even able to create surveys for students to take in order to keep up with how the class is doing or to get feedback in order to improve the college guidance program. At the end of the senior year, students take an exit survey where they document which school they are going to and how much scholarship money they have been offered. Naviance also has a bank of surveys that counselors from across the nation use so others can use it in their own school.

### **Networking**

Naviance creates a base for counselors from across the nation to collaborate on ideas, have discussions, join groups of counselors within their specific state, and just connect with others to see how others are using Naviance. There are also extensive resources in the Help Library for quick and detailed answers in case counselors face a roadblock in their use of the program. The support staff is extremely helpful and easily accessible as well.

### **Practical Tips for Implementation**

Naviance provides personalized training for counselors so they receive the support and guidance necessary to start up the program in the school. A significant amount of time will be needed for the training and starting up of Naviance.

### **Starting up**

When starting up with Naviance, counselors should receive thorough training, play around with the program, and create an account for themselves to act as a student navigating through the program. Accounts will need to be created for parents, students, and staff. Counselors will then begin populating the fields on the main page and choosing the correct settings for their school and student body.

### **Student use**

The assessments and curriculum are a great place to start for the students. Once they take all of the assessments, they can immediately start implementing their strengths and learning style to improve their study skills. The Naviance curriculum is comprised of modules that students can complete on their own. They should start completing them earlier on in the school year. Each grade has their own specified curriculum. After that, students will start exploring their career options based on their assessment results. These career options will lead to possible majors and then the colleges that offer those majors. Doing this earlier in high school allows for students to have extra time to schedule college visits and cater their high school plan accordingly.

### **11th and 12<sup>th</sup> grade**

The 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade is when Naviance will be used heavily. Students will use it to study for their college entrance exams, apply to colleges, request transcripts and recommendation letters. They will use it to search for scholarships and to make sure they are on track to graduate from high school.

### **Recommendations**

I highly recommend schools to designate counselors whose sole responsibility is college and career readiness. These counselors should have face to face time with students through a class called Advisory which should meet 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students a few times a year, 11<sup>th</sup> grade

students at least on a monthly basis, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade on a weekly basis in their first semester due to upcoming college application deadlines. Counselors should get thoroughly trained on Naviance before making it live to their students. Counselors should also plan on hosting three separate information sessions, one for staff, one for parents, and one for students. They will need guided assistance in getting started.

### **Conclusions**

Naviance is an online program that benefits all stakeholders. It contains all parts necessary to make a college preparation program efficient and effective. Administrators and counselors all have access to the information and reports that can be pulled before making goals for the upcoming school years. Students have a program that helps them understand their strengths and then help pave the path to their dreams. Without investing in a program such as this, counselors will never be able to provide the attention every student needs and deserves.

### References

Do What You Are® 2.0. (2016, April 22). Retrieved January 02, 2018, from

[http://community.naviance.com/t5/Naviance-Marketplace/Do-What-You-Are-2-0/ta-p/89](http://community.naviance.com/t5/Naviance-Marketplace/Do-What-You-Are-2-0/ta-p/896)

6

Learning Style Preferences. (n.d.). Retrieved January 02, 2018, from

<https://www.humanesources.com/research/learning-style-preferences/>

Naviance Test Prep Overview. (2016, February 12). Retrieved January 02, 2018, from

<http://community.naviance.com/t5/Naviance-Test-Prep/Naviance-Test-Prep-Overview/ta-p/18945>

The Nine Multiple Intelligences. (n.d.). Retrieved January 02, 2018, from

<https://www.humanesources.com/research-old/multiple-intelligences/>