

Roadtrip Nation Impact Report: Executive Summary



Roadtrip Nation Education

In 2007, after spending years collecting the stories of people who have made careers out of their passions, Roadtrip Nation saw a deep, relevant connection between their learnings from the Road and students in the classroom. The need for exploratory and inspiring student resources became even more acute with the release of the Gates Foundation's 'Silent Epidemic Report,' a study detailing the severity of America's dropout crisis, which cited a lack of student engagement as the key factor contributing to students' decisions to leave school.

In an effort to combat this issue and enhance student connectedness to school, Roadtrip Nation developed a project-based learning and career exploration curriculum called The Roadtrip Nation Experience. This self-discovery curriculum guides students to explore their unique identities and discover pathways aligned with their interests. The three overarching themes include:

- 1 Exposure:** Students connect to the Roadtrip Nation Interview Archive, gaining exposure to hundreds of successful real-world leaders spanning every industry who are living lives doing what they love.
- 2 Self-Construction:** Students engage in self-reflection activities, and explore the Archive based on their interests and themes that are relevant to their lives.
- 3 Hit the Road:** The culminating project sends students out into the real world on their own local Roadtrips to interview leaders whose interests align with students' natural interests and aspirations.

Ultimately, by helping students form connections between their studies, interests, and real-world opportunities, The Roadtrip Nation Experience motivates students to stay engaged in school and focused on their futures.

Education Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) Report

During the 2011-2012 academic school year, Dr. David Conley and his team from EPIC conducted a “deep dive” evaluation on The Roadtrip Nation Experience in three San Jose Unified School District PLUS Academies. This multi-method evaluation project used the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation’s Deeper Learning Rubric to answer the question:

How and to what extent does The Roadtrip Nation Experience foster students’ Deeper Learning?

The 6 broad domains of deeper learning, which support the Common Core Standards, include:

- 1 Mastering core academic content;
- 2 Engaging in expanding structure of knowledge;
- 3 Thinking critically and solving complex problems;
- 4 Communicating effectively;
- 5 Working collaboratively;
- 6 Learning how to learn.

Key Insights and Discoveries from the Report

Insight # 1

Significant Increase in Student Self-Efficacy

For almost every question administered on a final EPIC survey, Roadtrip Nation students at all three schools most frequently selected “I can do better” over all other response options. More Roadtrip Nation students selected “I can do better” than those not participating in the program. This finding is significant evidence of The Roadtrip Nation Experience supporting students’ development of self-awareness and desire to improve. And Roadtrip Nation students not only identified the need to do better—they did do better.

Insight # 2

GPA Increase

Roadtrip Nation students ended the academic year with a higher average GPA than comparison students, and they improved their average GPA by twice the rate of their peers. The average GPA of Roadtrip Nation students increased from 2.35 to 2.75, compared to a 2.4 to 2.6 increase in non-participating students. This increase in average GPA is interesting, because the program itself does not focus on academic achievement. The program’s focus revolves around behaviors, attitudes, and strategies—“noncognitive” factors that hold a direct positive relationship to students’ concurrent and future outcomes.

“Ariel Helwani (Roadtrip Nation Leader) was so shy and that’s exactly how I am... but if he can get through it, then certainly I can, too.”

Lincoln PLUS student

“Cheryl Foster’s (Roadtrip Nation Leader) story is a lesson for my own life—stop going through the motions and be brave in chasing what I want to do.”

Lincoln PLUS student

The Road Ahead

Just as PLUS Academy students increasingly responded “I can do better” after their Roadtrip Nation experiences, Roadtrip Nation is using the insights of this study to improve, as well. By augmenting areas that foster deeper learning, and crafting new components to fulfill key college readiness criteria, Roadtrip Nation can better help students prepare for future success.

To learn more about Roadtrip Nation’s various educational programs, please visit roadtripnation.org. To download EPIC’s full Roadtrip Nation Experience report, head to rtn.is/impact-report.