

NOLA[®]

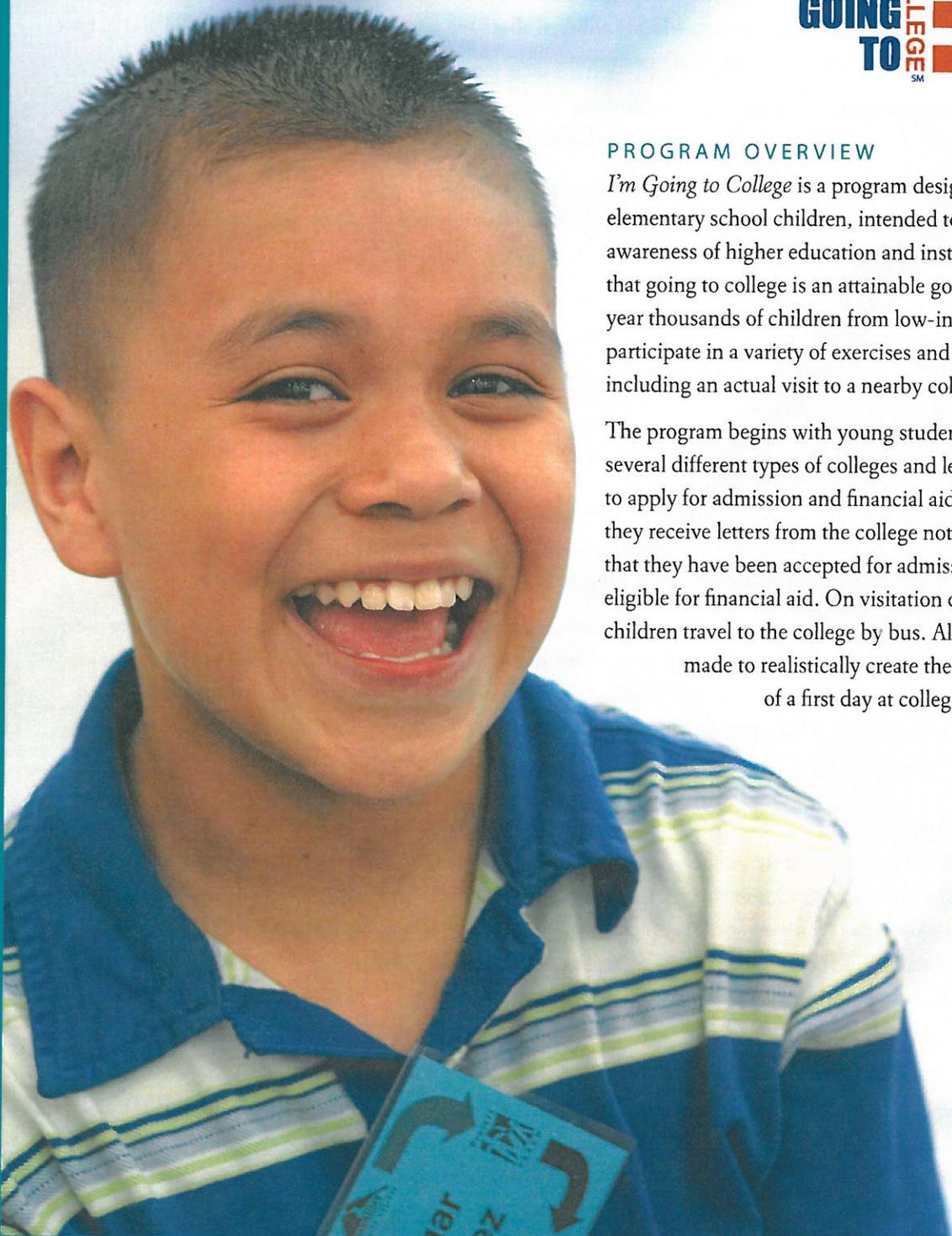
Alaska Advantage Programs
Commission on Postsecondary Education



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

I'm Going to College is a program designed for elementary school children, intended to create awareness of higher education and instill the idea that going to college is an attainable goal. Every year thousands of children from low-income areas participate in a variety of exercises and activities including an actual visit to a nearby college campus.

The program begins with young students studying several different types of colleges and learning how to apply for admission and financial aid. Weeks later they receive letters from the college notifying them that they have been accepted for admission and are eligible for financial aid. On visitation day, the children travel to the college by bus. All attempts are made to realistically create the experience of a first day at college.



WHO WE HELP

Each year professionals from Northwest Education Loan Association (NELA), colleges, and elementary schools partner to help thousands of low-income students consider the possibilities of college. NELA offers this program annually to more than 5,000 elementary students in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon, and partners with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) to offer it in Alaska.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

I'm Going to College is a program that was developed in response to the small number of low-income, minority students enrolled in college. Its mission is to educate children about the advantages of higher education and to have them experience college firsthand at a local college campus.

Social and financial pressures have led to major inequities in access to higher education across the nation. The need for resources that help students explore and actually attain higher education is huge. Consider these facts:

- Most eighth graders today will tell you that they plan to go to college. However, only about half of African American and Latino ninth graders graduate from high school within four years, compared to 79 percent of Asian Americans and 72 percent of Caucasians.
- A child from a higher income family is five times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree by age 24 than a child from a lower income family. Meanwhile, a recent study noted that a significant barrier to higher education for low-income individuals was not a lack of opportunity, but a lack of information about college and financial aid opportunities.
- For every 100 students in the U.S. who begin ninth grade, 67 finish high school in four years, 38 go to college and only 18 earn associate degrees within three years or bachelor's degrees within six. In Alaska, only 6% accomplish that goal. According to one study, if minority participation in higher education equaled that of Caucasians, over \$300 billion would be added in gross national product and tax revenues. Failure to educate underserved students will have a devastating impact on our ability to compete in an increasingly global economy.

A recent study indicated that low-income elementary students who participated in *I'm Going to College* were more likely than their peers to have discussed college preparation requirements with their parents and teachers. The study reports that *I'm Going to College* increased the likelihood that the student actually explored various colleges, and basic entrance requirements. This study concluded that *I'm Going to College* has an effect on sensitizing students from lower to middle socioeconomic status families to the possibilities of college attendance.

ABOUT NELA

Northwest Education Loan Association® (NELA), www.nela.net, is a not-for-profit organization that helps students and their parents understand financial aid and student loans through information, training and outreach activities. NELA administers the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) and guarantees student loans against default. Currently, the agency manages an outstanding loan portfolio of more than \$5 billion. Over the past 30 years, NELA has helped nearly 1 million students reach their dreams of higher education.

ABOUT ACPE

The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, an enterprise agency of the state of Alaska, offers the AlaskAdvantage® Programs, a package of higher education awareness and financial aid services, to assist Alaska students and the Alaska economy in taking advantage of the benefits of higher education. AlaskAdvantage® Programs are self-sustaining and are funded by the Alaska Student Loan Corporation, a public corporation and instrumentality of the State of Alaska since 1987.