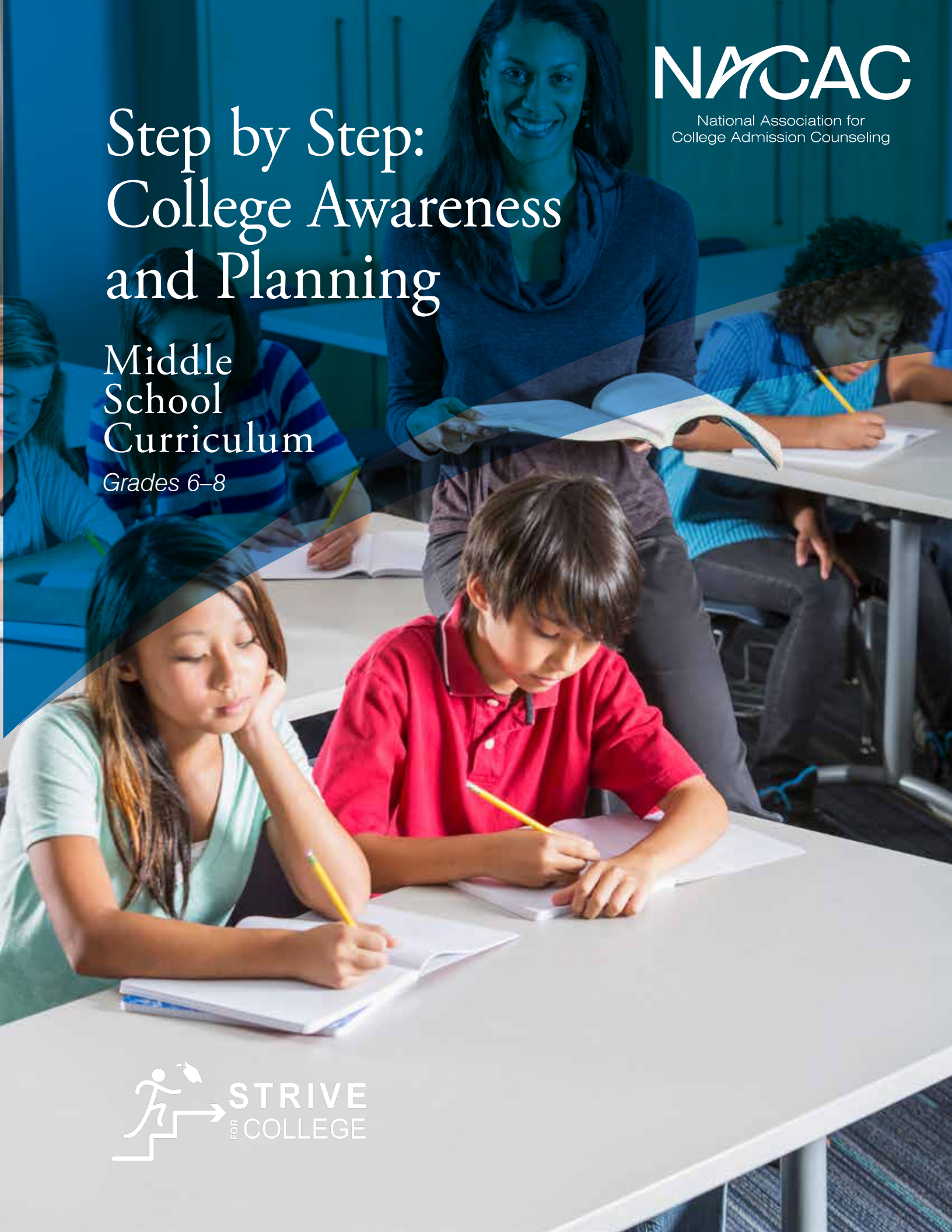


A photograph of a classroom scene. A female teacher with dark hair, wearing a blue top, stands in the background smiling. In the foreground, several students are seated at white desks, focused on their work. A boy in a red shirt is writing in a notebook, and a girl in a light green shirt is also writing. Other students are visible in the background, some looking at books or papers. The image has a blue tint overlay.

NACAC

National Association for
College Admission Counseling

Step by Step: College Awareness and Planning

Middle
School
Curriculum

Grades 6–8



Introduction

Guidance in the later years of middle school, and particularly the time of transition to high school, can put students on a successful path to college education. At this stage, a school counselor's role should include:

- Challenging students to see postsecondary admission and attendance as the goal after high school
- Encouraging students to assess their interests, strengths, and academic habits
- Helping students understand basic concepts regarding college options and financing a college education
- Providing a template for the college preparatory curriculum that students should plan for high school years
- Encouraging students to understand how they can build a profile and support network that will help them reach their college goals.

The following five-session curriculum lays a comprehensive foundation to address all of the above.

Note: While the curriculum is written in a practical order, it is important that you keep the needs of your group in mind. Change the order of the sessions if you feel the need.

Middle School Sessions

1

Session 1:
It's All About Me: My Future Goals. 60

2

Session 2:
Should I Go to College? 67

3

Session 3:
There Is a College For Everyone! 75

4

Session 4:
How Do I Get to College? (Part 1) 84

5

Session 5:
How Do I Get to College? (Part 2) 102

6

Resources for Middle School
Parent/Guardian Workshop 124

1

Session 1: It's All About Me: My Future Goals

The purpose of this session is to have students examine what they want when they graduate from high school, how their current interests can relate to future careers, and how they can learn more about particular careers.

Objectives

By the end of this session, students will have:

- shared thoughts about the future with peers who have similar interests
- learned how current interests can help them reach personal goals
- found more information about possible careers

Activities/Handouts

Activity #1: Peer Connections

Handout: Ice Breaker Bingo

Activity #2: What Do You Like?

Handout: My Interests

Activity #3: Making a Name for Myself

Handout: Career Fact/Business Card Exercise

1

Session I: It's All About Me: My Future Goals

Activity # 1: Peer Connections

Opening Discussion

While middle school students need to think about individual goals and plans, their peers can help them along the way.

Activity/Handout

Middle School Bingo—an ice breaker to get conversations started

Materials

Pencils

Bingo cards

Instructions

1. Print and copy a bingo card for each student.
2. Students circulate to find other students who match descriptions in the bingo squares.
3. When a match is found, the participant writes the name of the individual in the square. Different names must be used in each square.
4. When students have filled a row with names, they yell "Bingo!"
5. With the group, check the squares and identify the individuals described.
6. Continue the game for a second round, with the new goal of filling the entire card. (Set a five minute time-limit and then award the person who came closest.)
7. When students have filled the entire cards, they yell "Bingo!"
8. Check the entire card, identifying participants matching each description.
9. Read through card and have all participants stand when a category applies to them.

B	I	N	G	O
Does volunteer work	Would like to go out of state for college	Is a seventh grader	Speaks more than one language	Has been on the honor roll at school
Has a leadership role in his/her school	Is active in a church, temple or mosque	Wants to attend a small college	Wants to be a writer	Has parents or brother or sister who attended college
Wants to be a teacher	Was born in a country other than the US	FREE	Has visited a college campus in the last year	Participates in at least one extracurricular activity at school
Has moved in the last two years	Plays on a sports team	Wants to be a performer (music or drama)	Is an eighth grader	Wants to attend a large university
Plays a musical instrument	Studies (does homework) at least an hour a night	Has parents who didn't attend college	Wants to attend a community college	Wants to be a doctor or scientist

1

Session 1: It's All About Me: My Future Goals

Activity # 2: What Do You Like?

Opening Discussion

Getting students to think about careers and goals is important, but having them consider what interests them and how these interests could connect to careers is just as important. Thinking about why students like certain classes and activities can help them learn more about themselves.

Activity/Handout

My Interests

Instructions

1. Ask students to take about 10 minutes to fill in Part I of the "My Interests" chart.
2. Talk with them about their responses.
3. Have them complete Part 2 of the chart.
4. Ask them to share the responses to Part 2 with a partner. Encourage students to give each other feedback about career ideas. For example, whether they think the chosen career fits their partner's skills and interests.
5. Students report on their partners to entire group.

My Interests

Part 1—Directions: Look at the table below. On the left list the classes you like the best and tell why. On the right, list the activities you enjoy most, and explain why.

Classes	Activities

Part 2—Answer the following questions based on your responses to and discussions about Part I.

1. How are the classes you like and the activities you like the same or different?
2. Which classes and activities do you think you will want to continue in high school?
3. What new kinds of classes and activities do you look forward to adding in high school?
4. What jobs can you think of that could grow out of any of the classes or activities that you like?

1

Session 1: It's All About Me: My Future Goals

Activity #3: Making a Name for Myself

Opening Discussion

Now that students have had a chance to think about what they like and how their interests could lead them to a future path, they should be encouraged to think about specific careers they would like to learn more about—careers where they could make a name for themselves.

Activity/Handouts

Career Exploration

Career Interview

Materials

Markers

Instructions

1. Have students work in pairs—preferably with a “common interest buddy” from the Bingo Game.
2. Each partner should interview the other using the prompts on the “Career Exploration” sheet.
3. Have students design business cards based on the career they think would be most interesting
4. Encourage students to think of people they know who are working in career fields that interest them.

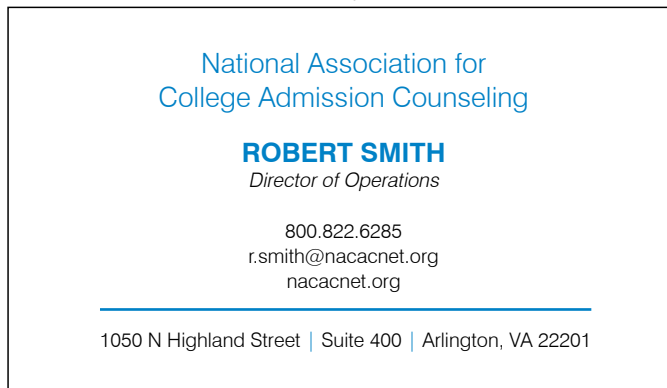
Outside of class, have students ask the role models some important questions:

- What did you dream about doing when you were in middle school or high school?
- How did you decide on this career?
- How much education did you need for this career?
- What is the best thing about your career and what would you change?

Career Exploration

1. I would like to know more about a career in:
2. I think this could be a good career for me because:
3. To learn more about this career, I should talk to:
4. I can also learn more about this career from the following places:
5. This is what my business card would look like if I worked in this career:

Sample



Design your own card

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the user to design their own business card.

2

Session 2: Should I Go to College?

The purpose of this session is to have students explore their ideas of college, whether they want to go to college, and how college could make a difference in their lives. Now that students have had a chance in Session 1 to think about possible career goals, they can learn more about how college can help them reach those goals. This is also a good time to help them understand that college is affordable.

Objectives

By the end of this session, students will have:

- a clear image of what a college is
- learned that many careers require a college degree
- a better understanding of how they can benefit from and attain a college degree

Activities/Handouts

Activity #1: College Knowledge

Handouts: College Knowledge Survey, Earning Power

Activity #2: Knowledge is Power

Handout: College Degree and Career

Activity #3: Know, Want, Learn

Handout: Know, Want, Learn

2

Session 2: Should I Go to College?

Activity #1: College Knowledge

Opening Discussion

Students at this age may have some ideas about college based on people they know, what they've seen on TV or the internet, or what they read. This is a good time to talk about their impressions of college and what they think college can do to help them in a future career.

Using the resource below from www.studentaid.ed.gov initiate a discussion with the students about why it isn't too early to think about college.

Why think about college now?

As a middle-school student, you probably have a lot on your mind: *Will I get this major school project finished on time? What should I do this weekend? Will my parents notice that I exceeded my cell phone's text limit this month?*

But have you seriously thought about college? Here are some reasons why you should start thinking about college now:

You say: It's too early to think about college!

We say: The steps you take now will determine your college options later. Start planning now!

You say: No one in my family ever went to college.

We say: Be the first! Set a good example for others to follow by meeting people and learning cool stuff in college.

You say: I can't afford it!

We say: Colleges, high school counselors, scholarship agencies, and even your state government can help meet the cost! More than half of college students get some type of financial aid. For example, if you take challenging courses and earn good grades, you could apply for scholarships.

Activity/Handouts

College Knowledge Survey

Earning Power

Instructions

1. Give each student the "College Knowledge" survey and ask them to answer the questions in a few words.
2. Then talk about your answers as a group.
3. After the discussion, hand out the "Earning Power" sheet with the graph that shows how education pays.
4. Read "Earning Power" together and discuss.

College Knowledge Survey

Answer these questions in a few words. These are your own thoughts. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. What do you think of when you hear the word college?
2. Who do you know who goes to or has been to college? Which school?
3. Why do you think students continue on to college after high school?
4. What jobs do you think require a college education?
5. What colleges do you know about? How do you know about these colleges?
6. What other things do you think that you can do in college besides study and take classes?
7. Why do you want to go to college?

Adapted from Cabral, Joshua. "Addressing the Needs of First-Generation, College-Bound Students: A Comprehensive 5th–12th Grade Approach." South Boston Harbor Academy Charter School.

Earning Power

There is real, independent evidence that shows education leads to higher pay.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, college graduates age 25 and over earn nearly twice as much as workers who stopped with a high school diploma.

Good paying jobs usually require at least a high school diploma. An employer may even request your high school transcripts.

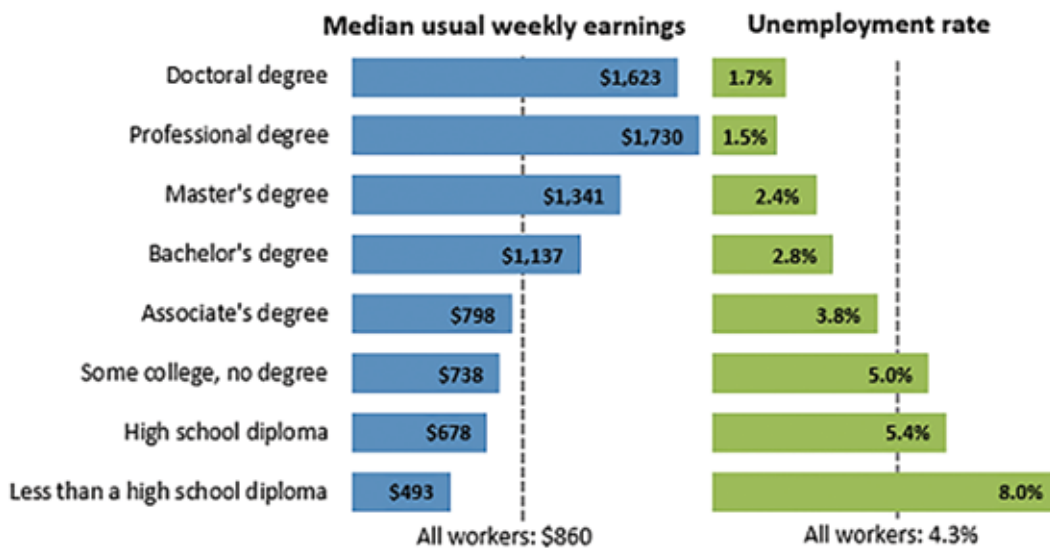
Living away from home, making new friends and taking unique courses are all a part of the college experience. But, it gets even better! A college education will offer you more money, more job choices, and more freedom.

Businesses want more than employees with a high school diploma—they want problem solvers, good thinkers, and people who are flexible and want continue learning. People with college educations generally have more jobs to choose from.

More Money

On average, a person who goes to college earns more money than a person who doesn't.

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2015



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

2

Session 2: Should I Go to College?

Activity #2: Knowledge is Power

Opening Discussion

Although money isn't the only reason to consider a particular career, remember that a job that pays well offers more personal choices. Read and discuss with the students these real-life examples of how college pays off.

Real-Life Examples

People with a college education typically earn more money during a shorter span of time.

Buying Groceries

1. Terry is a dental assistant (two years of college). Terry will earn enough money to buy groceries for a week after working only one day.
2. Pat is a high school graduate and works as a salesperson in a department store. To buy the same groceries, it takes Pat three days.

Buying a Car

1. Jamie is a college graduate and works as an accountant. Jamie will earn enough money to buy a new four-door compact car in about one year.
2. Chris never went to college and works as an aerobics instructor. It will take Chris about three years to buy the same car.

Source: www.studentaid.ed.gov

Activity/Handout

Careers by Degrees

Instructions

1. Put the career titles in the chart (next page) on strips of paper and write the categories (two-year colleges, four-year colleges, and more than four years of college) on the board with blank spaces underneath.
2. Ask each student to select a strip of paper and place that strip under the appropriate category.
3. When all the students are finished, reveal the answers (next page).

This will give students a chance to brainstorm about how much education it takes to be in representative professions. (For example, there may be some question about why a dancer would need a college degree. Erika Kinetz in a Dec. 2005 *New York Times* article wrote about many dancers who don't have degrees but also notes that those with degrees are more employable if dance doesn't work out, can find better paying jobs when dancing careers end.)

Careers by Degrees

A major benefit of a college degree is having more jobs to choose from. Below are just some possibilities available to college graduates.

Not sure what one of the jobs is? Do a little investigating at www.bls.gov/ooh. Check out the in-demand jobs!

Certificate	Two-Year College (Associate degree)	Four-Year College (Bachelor's degree)	More than Four Years (Graduate degree)
• chef/culinary arts^{1,2} • dental assistant • emergency medical technician or paramedic¹ • heating, air conditioning, or refrigeration mechanic or installer¹ • licensed practical or licensed vocational nurse • medical assistant¹	• computer and office equipment repairer • dental hygienist • disc jockey (deejay) • firefighter² • fitness trainer • mechanic • medical assistant • physical therapist assistant • restaurant manager • web developer/administrator² • zookeeper²	• accountant • athletic trainer • chemist • computer programmer • engineer • financial planner • FBI agent • graphic designer • interpreter/translator • pilot • pharmacist • photographer • registered nurse • social worker • sportscaster/news reporter • teacher • writer	• architect • dentist • lawyer • minister, priest, or rabbi • nurse practitioner • physical therapist • physician • physician assistant • psychologist • scientist • university professor • veterinarian

1—You can also train for these jobs at a two-year college. Why? Because more education usually means more earnings!

2—You can also train for these jobs at a four-year college. Why? Because more education usually means more earnings!

2

Session 2: Should I Go to College?

Activity #3: Know, Want, Learn

Opening Discussion

Now that students have some idea of the value of college, they should be encouraged to explore how to research colleges in which they might be interested.

Activity/Handout

Know, Want, Learn (KWL)

Handouts/Materials

College websites and viewbooks

Instructions

1. Provide guidebooks and viewbooks or refer students to college websites.
2. Have each student research three schools, then complete the “already know” column for each school.
3. Have the students fill in the chart using their three schools.
4. Have a few students share one thing they learned about a specific college.

Know, Want, Learn (KWL)

Directions: List what you already know about a college in the KNOW column.
List what you want to know in the WANT column.
List new information you learn in the LEARN column.

College 1	College 2	College 3
Already Know		
Want to Learn		
I Learned		

3

Session 3: There is a College for Everyone! Find Your Buried Treasure

The purpose of this session is to affirm students' belief that college is attainable. Activities are designed to help students understand that there exists a vast array of college possibilities for all students and that students are responsible for identifying their own college options. In this session, students are encouraged to begin thinking about what they value and what they may look for in a college. Students are exposed to some of the resources available for college research.

Objectives

By the end of this session, students:

- understand that the college experience is very different from the middle or high school experience
- gain an understanding of different types of colleges and the different experiences and opportunities offered
- have been introduced to some of the resources available for getting to know about colleges
- will begin to explore the kind(s) of colleges which might be a “fit”
- have been introduced to web-based resources for researching college information.

Materials

All Activities: blackboard and chalk, dry-erase board and markers, or flipchart with markers

Activities/Handouts

Activity #1: Evaluating Your School Experience So Far

Activity #2: Getting to Know College Possibilities

Handout: How Can I Start Thinking About College?

Activity #3: Starting Your Search for the Right College

Handout: Your Map to Buried (College) Treasure

Activity #4: Using the Internet to Research Colleges

Handout: Internet Sites Focused on College Exploration

Additional Resources

Access to computers, if possible. Alternatively, you may want to photocopy examples of web pages students may access for free.

3

Session 3: There Is A College For Everyone! Find Your Buried Treasure

Activity #1: Evaluating Your School Experience So Far

Opening Discussion

Remind students that they probably didn't have much choice when it came to selecting the schools that they are currently attending. Additionally, remind students that there may not be a large number of options regarding their choice for high school. However, the sky's the limit when it comes to the choices students will have for college. And this is a good time to begin thinking about all of the possibilities.

Questions to open up discussion:

- How was it decided which middle school you would attend?
- What have you liked about your current school?
- What would you change if you could?
- If you could choose your middle (junior high) school now, what would you look for in a school?
- How will the high school you attend be determined?
- How well do you anticipate that your high school will fit you and your goals?

Instructions

1. Ask students to brainstorm lists of qualities that they believe would make a school "just right" and list these qualities on a blackboard or flipchart.
2. Have students discuss the qualities on the list and how these might apply to their college search.
(Keep a list or take a photo so you can refer back to it.)

3

Session 3: There Is A College For Everyone! Find Your Buried Treasure

Activity # 2: Getting to Know College Possibilities

Opening Discussion

Colleges aren't all the same. All colleges and universities have different missions (or functions). This activity is designed to teach students the different types of higher education opportunities that exist for them after college. Those qualities that students listed as "making a school just right" in Activity #1 are likely some of the qualities that they will want to look for in a college.

Activity/Handout

How Can I Start to Think About College?

Instructions

1. Give every student the handout, "How Can I Start to Think About College?" Allow students a few minutes to read the handout; then review the different types of colleges with the students.
2. As headings, write each category of college on the blackboard or flipchart pages.
3. Ask students to suggest names of colleges that they think fit into each category. Help them evaluate each suggested college accurately; then write the name of the college under the correct heading on blackboard or flipcharts.

Alternate Activity

Ask students to suggest people they know who have attended specific colleges and then evaluate which category that institution falls under. Write the name of the college under the correct heading on the blackboard or flipchart.

How Can I Start to Think About College?

We know you are interested in going to college. Today, college probably seems like it is a long way off. But, in just a couple of years, you will begin to think about particular colleges that you might want to attend. In the end, picking one college out of hundreds requires lots of thought and research. Here are some ways to begin thinking about your college options:

Getting Started

It is important to remember that you want to pick a college that is *right for you*! You will be sitting in the college classroom—not your parents or your best friend. You will want to seek lots of advice along the way, especially from teachers or counselors who know colleges well. But, in the end, no one can tell you where you'll thrive. So start by asking yourself questions about how you feel about school right now:

1. How do I learn best? In large classes or small groups?
2. Do I like being one of the best in a class, or do I need the competition of other equally bright classmates in order to challenge myself?
3. Do I learn more quickly when structure is clear and uniform, or does freedom to make choices about how I spend my time for a class fit me better?
4. What extracurricular activities have been most important to me? Which will I want to continue in college?
5. What have I learned about my academic interests and abilities that influence what I may study in college?
6. Who are my friends? Do I want my relationships in college to be similar or different?

Answers to these questions will help you apply what you have already learned about yourself as you think about college possibilities.

Include Your Family

Now is a good time to start talking with your family about college. Are they ready to support you as you plan for college? Are there colleges that they hope you will consider? Are they comfortable with allowing you to travel a great distance for college? Are there limits to what they can or will contribute to your college finances?

If you and your parents are on the same page—great! If not, this might be a good time to share what you are learning in these workshops—or to ask your family to talk with the leader of these workshops to learn more about the advantages and range of colleges. If they are worried about paying for college, your workshop leader can help them understand the financial aid process.

College Vocabulary

Colleges aren't all the same. Different colleges and universities have different missions (or functions, or goals). While no two are exactly alike, most fit into one or more of the following categories:

Liberal arts colleges focus on the education of undergraduate students. Classes are generally taught by professors who see teaching as their primary responsibility. Because most liberal arts colleges are smaller than universities, classes tend to be smaller and more personal attention is available. As opposed to preparation for a specific career path, students who attend liberal arts colleges are exposed to a broad base of courses in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. In addition, they select at least one area of in-depth study that is their college major. Many employers look for graduates of liberal arts programs and value their well-rounded preparation.

Universities are generally larger and include a liberal arts college, as well as some professionally oriented colleges,

and graduate programs. Universities offer a greater range of academic choices than liberal arts colleges. They will likely provide more extensive resources in terms of library, laboratory, fine arts and athletic facilities. At many large universities, class size will reflect institutional size and most introductory classes are taught in a lecture format.

Technical institutes and professional schools enroll students who have made clear decisions about what they want to study and emphasize preparation for specific careers, for example in music or fine arts, engineering, or technical sciences. You will want to be quite sure of your future direction before selecting one of these options.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) find their origins in the time when African-American students were systematically denied access to most other colleges and universities. Students at HBCUs have a unique opportunity to experience an educational community in which they are a part of the majority. They find committed faculty mentors who encourage their expectations of success.

Hispanic-serving Institutions are colleges, universities or systems/districts where total Hispanic enrollment constitutes a minimum of 25 percent at either the undergraduate or graduate level.

Women's colleges, with their larger numbers of female faculty and administrators, offer college women confidence-building role models, greater opportunities to serve in a full range of student leadership positions, and a heightened awareness of career possibilities for women.

Community or junior colleges generally offer the first two years of a liberal arts education, in addition to specialized occupational preparation. An associate degree is awarded at the end of a two-year program of studies, following which many students continue their education at a four-year institution. Student can also earn certificates for specific careers in under two years.

Proprietary institutions are considered for-profit companies that operate under the demands of investors and stockholders. They attract adult learners and part-time students in search of narrowly focused professional training opportunities. These programs usually offer a non-traditional format; many for-profits also have classes solely available online.

Other College Terms

Public colleges and universities are financed by state taxes. Their primary mission is often to serve students who live where you do. Generally, they cost less than private colleges.

Private colleges and universities aren't supported by states or taxes. Some receive support from religious groups or endowments.

Financial aid comes in many forms and helps students with need pay for college costs. Financial aid includes:

- **grants:** money given to students based upon family income
- **scholarships:** awards based upon school performance, test scores, or special talents (like sports or music).

Undergraduate degrees include: a two-year **associate degree** (earned at a community college or two-year private college) and a **bachelor's degree** (completed at a four-year institution).

3

Session 3: There Is A College For Everyone! Find Your Buried Treasure

Activity #3: Starting Your Search for the Right College

Opening Discussion

In this activity, students are encouraged to explore the many characteristics of colleges and universities that should be considered as they consider options and what constitutes an appropriate “fit.”

Activity/Handouts

Your Map to Buried (College) Treasure

Additional Resources

Several websites and viewbooks

Instructions

1. Give every student the “Treasure Map.”
2. Review with students each of the bolded sections on the map.
3. Ask students to complete their own treasure maps.
4. Bring students back together as an entire group, and invite them to share which “map points” were most important to them and why.
5. Divide students into groups of two or three. Ask them to use the guidebooks and viewbooks to find information that would help them dig up information on their treasure map.
6. Ask each group to share what kind of information they were able to locate—and where it was found.

Your Map to Buried (College) Treasure

"I look for my buried "college" treasure, this map as my guide."



START HERE

PS (Pirate School) #1

DISTANCE FROM HOME: I want to look for my treasure:

☐ close to home ☐ not too close to home ☐ not sure

Do you think that you will want to be close to home? Would you enjoy traveling to a new place? Some students find that it helps to have the support of family close by while in college; others need to get away from distractions.



HOUSING: When I finish a day of looking for treasure I want to: ☐ be living at home ☐ be living on campus in a dormitory

For a first year, it is best to live either at home or in a dormitory on-campus. Which option seems best for you? Check to see what housing options are available.

COLLEGE TYPE: After reading the handout on "college types," I think that I might want to look at the following kind of college treasure:

(Fill in the blank)

SIZE: As I look for my treasure I plan to travel on this size "ship" ☐ small (fewer than 2,000 pirates) ☐ medium ☐ large ☐ not sure

The size of your college will determine many possibilities including: the number of majors offered, activities available, number of books in the library, class size, and attention from teachers. (Small colleges may be as small as 500 students, medium sized 3,000-5,000, and large as many as 25,000-50,000 students.)

LOCATION: I'd like to dig for treasure:

☐ in or near a big city ☐ in a quieter location

Are the opportunities of a city important, or do you want a quiet, self-contained campus that will help you focus on your studies?

COLLEGE MAJOR: After you find your treasure—where would you like it to take you? Do you have a college major or career plan? If so, for which strong programs should you look?

(Fill in the blank with college major or career choice)

DIVERSITY: The pirates on my ship will be: (check all that apply) ☐ from the same place as me ☐ from my racial/ethnic background ☐ from my religious group ☐ both male and female ☐ the same gender as me

At some colleges most students come from one place or one ethnic group. At others, there will be a real mix of students from around the country and from different backgrounds. With whom would you like to attend college?

ACTIVITIES: Even pirates can't spend all of their time looking for treasure! How would you like to use your spare time? Are extracurricular activities (sports, drama, music, fraternities, and sororities, etc.) important to you? Campus activities that matter to me include:

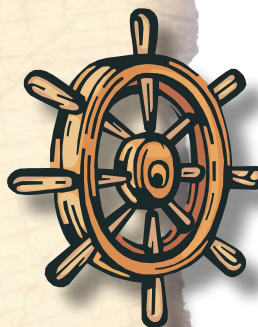
(Fill in the blank with one or two activities)

GRADUATION RATE: No college treasure hunt is complete without researching how many admitted students are successful in finishing a degree! Make sure that your search includes information on how many students return after their first year and how many stay to graduate.

(Fill in the blank with the graduation rate)

END POINT: Congratulations—you are on your way to finding

COLLEGE TREASURE!



3

Session 3: There Is A College For Everyone! Find Your Buried Treasure

Activity #4: Using the Internet to Research Colleges

Opening Discussion

As early and as often as possible, students should make use of internet tools in researching:

- specific colleges
- the college admission process
- financial aid and scholarships

This session will familiarize students with current and responsible websites.

Activity/Handout

Websites Focused on College Exploration

Additional Resources

Computer access, if possible. Alternatively, photocopy examples of web pages that students may access for free.

Instructions

1. Distribute handout listing free websites for exploring colleges.
2. Explain the difference between free websites and those which charge fees for use.
3. If a computer with a projector or a Smart Board is available, walk students through one of the websites. Alternatively, use photocopied web pages.
4. Encourage students to use computers at school, at the library or at home to begin researching colleges and college fits.
5. If computers are available, allow students to begin exploring. Circulate to be of assistance throughout this activity.

Websites Focused on College Exploration

College Information

Center for Student Opportunity: www.imfirst.org
 Coalition Application:
www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org
 College Navigator: <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>
 College Board: www.collegeboard.org
 Colleges That Change Lives: www.ctcl.org
 Hobsons' CollegeView: www.collegeview.com
 KnowHow2Go: www.knowhow2go.org
 Peterson's: www.petersons.com
 The Common Application: www.commonapp.org
 Undocumented Students:
www.nacacnet.org/UndocumentedStudents
 Universal College Application:
www.universalcollegeapp.com

Financial Aid and Scholarship information

College ScoreCard: <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>
 CSS/Financial Aid Profile:
<https://profileonline.collegeboard.org>
 FAFSA4caster: www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov
 Fastweb: www.fastweb.com
 Federal Student Aid: <http://studentaid.ed.gov>
 FindTuition: www.findtuition.com
 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):
www.fafsa.gov
 Sallie Mae: www.salliemae.com
 The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid:
www.finaid.org

Testing

ACT Fee Waiver: www.actstudent.org/faq/feewaiver.html
 ACT: www.act.org
 Test Prep from Number2.com: www.number2.com
 Kaplan Test Prep: www.kaptest.com
 PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT: www.psat.org
 SAT Fee Waiver: www.sat.org/fee-waivers
 SAT Prep from Khan Academy: www.satpractice.org
 SAT: www.sat.org
 The Princeton Review: www.princetonreview.com

Non-Profit Organizations

First In The Family: www.firstinthefamily.org/highschool
 Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities:
www.hacu.net
 National Association for College Admission
 Counseling: www.nacacnet.org
 National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher
 Education: www.nafeonation.org
 United Negro College Fund (UNCF): www.uncf.org

Athletics

Athletic Aid: www.athleticaid.com
 National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics: <http://naia.org>
 NCAA Eligibility Center:
www.ncaa.org/eligibility-center

Careers

The Occupational Outlook Handbook:
www.bls.gov/ooh
 Roadmap to Careers:
<https://collegeboard.roadtripnation.com>

4

Session 4 (Part 1): How Do I Get To College?

Looking Ahead: Making the Transition to High School and Beyond

Entering high school will bring many changes and more independence, which means that students should be prepared to make some of their own decisions about what courses to take, how committed they will be to doing well, and how to become involved in extracurricular activities. All of those decisions will ultimately have an impact on when, where, and whether they will go to college. To make the most of their high school careers, students should have an idea of what their strengths and weaknesses are and what they can do to enhance their strengths and improve their weaknesses.

Objectives

By the end of this session students will have:

- developed a curriculum plan for high school
- discussed study skills and different academic expectations of high school
- discussed preparation for standardized testing
- examined factors colleges are looking for in potential applicants

Activities/Handouts

Activity #1: Planning For the Future

Handouts: High School Classes Open the Doors to College

What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College?

Activity #2: Making the Most of the High School Experience

Handouts: How Do I Learn?

Suggested Aids for Different Learning Styles

Your School Counselor Can Be Your “College Planning Buddy”

Common Application Teacher Recommendation

Activity #3: Getting Involved

Handouts: Activities Questionnaire, Interests, and Related Activities with List of Clubs and Organizations

Activity #4: Time Management

Handouts: Banking Your Time, Personal Daily Time

4

Session 4: How Do I Get to College? (Part 1)

Activity #1: Planning for the Future

Opening Discussion

Preparing for college entrance and success begins with extremely careful planning of high school course work. Every student needs to focus the bulk of energy during the high school years on classes that are truly “college-preparatory.” While it is certainly important to “enrich” a four-year schedule with classes in the fine and practical arts, colleges will look for the “meat and potatoes” classes in English, mathematics, world languages, laboratory sciences, and history/social sciences.

Activities/Handouts

High School Classes Open the Doors to College

What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College?

Materials

Chalkboard or flipchart

Instructions

1. Engage the students in a discussion of which courses they think would be considered “college preparatory.” Write their suggestions on the board.
2. Distribute handout, “High School Classes Open the Doors to College,” and read it with them, answering any questions.
3. Distribute activity sheet, “What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College.” Ask them to take a few minutes to fill out both columns of the chart.
4. Role Play: Divide students into pairs and ask one to pretend to be the school counselor/teacher and the other the student. The scenario is a meeting focused on what courses the student should be taking in ninth grade that will lead to a strong high school curriculum. Demonstrate, then give them a few minutes to role play and switch roles.
5. Allow the pairs to report to the larger group about the ways they are and aren’t on track for college. What deficiencies have been identified? What do individual students need to do to catch up?
6. Answer any questions that this activity may have brought forward.

High School Classes Open the Doors to College

Because you are planning to go to college, it's important that you take the right classes in high school.

Beginning in ninth grade, the majority of your classes should be ones that prepare you for admission to and, perhaps even more importantly, success in college. Most admission officers tell you that the first thing they look at is your choice of classes—even before they look at grades. When it comes time to apply to college you want to make sure that you meet the admission criteria of *all* colleges in which you are interested. Always remember that it is much better to be “overprepared” than “underprepared.”

Here's what you need by the end of your senior year to meet the admission expectations at a majority of colleges:

- Four full years of English classes. This includes courses in which you study writing and courses in which you read literature. Colleges know that you need to be able to write well in nearly every career. You need to be able to read and analyze, and you need to develop strong communication skills!
- Four full years of math classes. Students who take math in each year of high school are far more successful in college than students taking only three years. Math is the tool that you will use for many other classes, especially those in science. Your math classes should include at least four of the following six classes:
 - Pre-algebra
 - Algebra
 - Geometry
 - Algebra II and/or trigonometry
 - Precalculus
 - Calculus

Never “skip” a year of math in high school, because you will lose your momentum. If you don't take math in your senior year, you will find the math classes required in college to be very difficult!

- Three–four years of laboratory science classes. You will have the strongest background if you have taken at least one year each of:
 - Biology
 - Chemistry
 - Physics
- Two years minimum of social sciences. Most college freshmen studied World History and American History in high school. Other social science options include:
 - Government
 - Sociology
 - Geography
 - Psychology
- Two–four years of world language. More colleges are requiring a minimum of two years of language study while in high school for admission. Because many colleges require students to study a second language, it is important that you expose yourself to the study of languages while in high school.
- A small number of colleges require one year of visual or performing art prior to admission. Participation

in these classes in high school can help you to develop a “special talent” that will make you a highly qualified applicant.

As a summary, most colleges require students to meet certain college prep curriculum standards. Colleges may want to see advanced courses, such as honors and/or AP, that demonstrate the ability to succeed in higher levels of academics. Meeting the minimum isn't the best way to prepare for college. Strong preparation means going beyond the minimum—allowing you to start your college career in college-level courses, not remedial courses that are designed to help you catch up or review high school material—for *no credit*!

Athletes: Work with your counselor and coaches to make sure that your classes meet the standards of the NCAA Clearinghouse. Go to <http://eligibilitycenter.org> for more information.

What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College?

Subject	Minimum preparation	State universities and other selective college requirements	Highly-selective college recommendations	Courses I would like to take	Courses I need to take
English	4 years, with emphasis on essay/theme writing	4 years, with emphasis on written/oral communications and literature	4 years at the Honors/AP level when possible		
Math	3 years, including algebra, geometry, and advanced algebra	4 years, including geometry and advanced algebra	4 years, including trigonometry, pre-calculus, and calculus (Honors/AP level)		
Social Studies	2–3 years, including 1 year of US History and 1–2 years from other social sciences	2–3 years, including 1 year of US History and 1–2 years from other social sciences	3–4 years, including 1 year of US History, 1 year of World or European History (Honors/AP level)		
Science	2 years of lab science: biology, chemistry, or physics	3–4 years of lab science: biology, chemistry, or physics	3–4 years of lab science: biology, chemistry, and physics (Honors/AP level)		
World language	Some programs require 2 years of one language	2–3 years of one world language	3–4 years of one language		

4

Session 4: How Do I Get to College? (Part 1)

Activity #2: Making the Most of the High School Experience

Opening Discussion

Now that the students have a clearer idea of what colleges are looking for and how their course selection might enhance their opportunities for admission, it is time for them to appreciate the importance of strong study skills, as well as understand that each of them has the ability to become a competitive applicant for college. By determining how they learn best, they can begin to plan for ways to be successful in high school.

Activities/Handouts

How Do I Learn?**Suggested Aids for Different Learning Styles****Tips for Making Your Classes Count****Your School Counselor Can Be Your “College Planning Buddy”****Common Application Teacher Recommendation Form**

Instructions

1. Ask the students to honestly complete the “How Do I Learn?” handout.
2. Once they have determined which learning methods they think best suit them, pair students into “like” learning styles and instruct them to look at the “Suggested Aids” and “Tips for Making Your Classes Count.” They should then discuss ways they might implement the tips they think would be helpful. Have them circle one or two ideas from the “Suggested Aids” handout they think may work.
3. Again in pairs, demonstrate then lead the students in a role play in a teacher/student scenario where the teacher helps the student understand how to develop good study habits based on the “Suggested Aids.” Be sure they also consider good test taking strategies based on their findings.
4. Looking at the handout “Your School Counselor Can Be Your Buddy,” discuss the importance of building a support network of adults and peers to help maximize the high school experience.
5. Ask these questions aloud for the entire group to answer or have them write them privately: Describe your favorite teacher (or coach or activity leader). What makes that person special? What would that teacher say about you? Write your recommendations from that person’s point of view (use the Coalition App, Common App, or Universal App form). Impress upon the students that in many ways, they will be writing their teacher recommendations themselves as they go through high school, so it is important that they find a supportive teacher.

How Do I Learn?

(Reprinted with permission, Incentive Publications, Inc. Nashville, TN, 1990)

Read each statement below and select the appropriate number as it applies to you:

Often (3) Sometimes (2) Seldom/never (1)

Learning by seeing:

- ___ I remember information better if I write it down.
- ___ Looking at the person who is talking helps keep me focused.
- ___ I need a quiet place to get my work done.
- ___ I find it easiest to learn something new by watching a demonstration of how to do it.
- ___ I enjoy reading most when I can read descriptive passages that allow me to create mental pictures.
- ___ I usually remember people I have met by their faces (I forget names).
- ___ When I take a test, I can see the textbook page in my head.
- ___ I need to write down directions, not just take them verbally.
- ___ Music or background noises distract my attention from the task at hand.
- ___ I don't always get the meaning of a joke.
- ___ I doodle and draw pictures on the margins of my notebook pages.
- ___ I have trouble following lectures.
- ___ I react very strongly to colors.
- ___ **TOTAL**

Learning by hearing:

- ___ My papers and notebooks always seem messy.
- ___ When I read, it helps to use my finger to track my place on the line.
- ___ I find it easiest to learn something new by listening to someone explain how to do it.
- ___ I enjoy reading most when I can read dialogue between characters.
- ___ I usually remember people I have met by their names (I forget faces).
- ___ I don't follow written directions well.
- ___ If I hear something, I will remember it.
- ___ Writing has always been difficult for me.
- ___ I often misread words from the text ("them" for "then").
- ___ I would rather listen and learn than read and learn.
- ___ I'm not very good at interpreting an individual's body language.
- ___ Pages with small print or poor quality copies are difficult for me to read.
- ___ My eyes tire quickly, even though my vision check-up is always fine.
- ___ **TOTAL**

Learning by doing: (touching, feeling, smelling, moving)

- _____ I start a project before reading the directions.
- _____ I hate to sit at a desk for long periods of time.
- _____ I enjoy reading most when I can read stories with a lot of action in the beginning.
- _____ I usually remember people I have met by their mannerisms, motions and actions.
- _____ I prefer first to see something done and then do it myself.
- _____ I use trial and error approach to problem-solving.
- _____ I like to read my textbook while doing something else.
- _____ I take frequent study breaks.
- _____ I have a difficult time giving step-by-step instructions.
- _____ I use my hands when describing things.
- _____ I have to rewrite or type my class notes to reinforce the material.
- _____ **TOTAL**

- Record your totals here: Learning by seeing: _____ Learning by hearing: _____
Learning by doing: _____
- Circle the learning type with the highest score.
- Now look at "Suggested Aids for Learning Styles" and discuss with your partner how you think you might be able to take advantage of some of those aids to improve your study habits. (Circle one or two ideas that may work for you.)

Suggested Aids for Different Learning Styles

VISUAL	AUDITORY (HEARING)	SENSING
Use guided imagery	Use recordings	Pace/walk as you study
Form pictures in your mind	Watch TV	Physically "do it"
Take notes	Listen to music	Practice repeated times
See parts of words	Speak/listen to speakers	Breathe slowly
Use "cue" words	Make up rhymes/poems	Role play
Use notebooks	Read aloud	Exercise
Use colored study cards	Talk to yourself	Dance
Use photographs	Repeat things orally	Write on surfaces with a finger
Use charts, graphs	Have discussions	Write lists repeatedly
Use maps	Listen carefully	Move in chair
Draw, use drawings	Say words in syllables	Watch lips move in front of mirror
Use mnemonics (acronyms, visual chains, mind maps)	Use mnemonics (word links, rhymes, poems, lyrics)	Use mnemonics (word links, rhymes, poems, lyrics)

Tips for Making Your Classes Count

- **Sit close to the front** of the classroom when possible.
- **Join in** class discussions.
- **Ask questions!** If you don't understand something, chances are others in the class don't understand either.
- **Keep up** with class assignments. Finish them before they're due.
- **Ask for help** in any class in which you find yourself falling behind. Remember, your teachers want to help you succeed!
- Look for ways to **sharpen your basic skills** in each class. You can practice your writing skills in history, your algebra skills in science, and your math and science skills in vocational education classes (give examples).
- **Sharpen keyboarding** skills so you can type well and quickly.
- Learn to **take good class notes**. You'll be taking lots of notes during the rest of your life.
- Learn to **proofread, correct, and rewrite** your written work.
- **Develop test-taking skills**. Your counselor and teachers can show you how to get the most out of your test preparation.

Outside of high school (what you do outside of school counts too!):

- Develop **habits** now that will help you succeed in high school, in education after high school, and in the world of work. Give examples, such as "arrive on time."
- Find a **quiet place to study** where you won't be interrupted. Is it just too noisy at home? Ask your family or a teacher to help you find a place to study.
- Plan a **daily homework schedule** and stick to it. Do more than is required.
- Ask your **family or friends** to read your written work. And ask them for help if you're having trouble at school.
- Use your local **library**. If you don't have a library card now, ask the librarian for one. They're free.
- Read **newspapers and magazines**. Talk with your family and friends about what you read.
- Look up words you don't know in the **dictionary**. Then use your new words in writing and while talking.
- Talk with your family about **career plans** and what you want to do in the future.

Your School Counselor Can Be Your “College Planning Buddy”

Hopefully, there will be several sources for support as you prepare for and make your way through high school: family, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, and friends, but one you may not have considered is your school counselor. School counselors are one of the best ongoing sources of information and support for students who plan to go to college. If you are lucky enough to have a counselor in your middle school, it is a good idea to visit that person on a regular basis. Most school counselors have many, many students they want to help. To make sure your counselor knows you are planning for college, a good way to start is with a visit to introduce yourself and explain that college is your goal.

While you are still in middle school, your counselor can help you make sure that you are taking all of the classes necessary so that you will be able to take college-preparatory high school classes. When it comes time to register for high school and to pick your courses, you will want to meet with a counselor to plan a strong high school program that will open the doors to any college you wish to attend.

When you get to high school, your counselor can help you:

- Plan classes that prepare you well for college admission and success. Your counselor knows which high school classes are required for college admission.
- Review how you are doing in your classes and suggest areas that need improvement. If you need to do some catching up, your counselor can make suggestions.
- Find special programs that may help you prepare for college, beyond your school's walls. These might include weekend or summer programs on college campuses (often free to students whose parents didn't go to college), internships, or community college classes open to high school students. Your counselor will know about local college fairs, opportunities to visit college campuses, and even overnight visits to colleges that may be offered.
- Familiarize yourself with everything you need to know about taking recommended and/or required college admission tests. Counselors know how and when to register for tests. They can even help determine whether your family is eligible for a fee waiver.
- Figure out how to PAY for college by applying for financial aid from colleges and scholarship agencies.
- Meet with your family to help them understand how the college admission and financial aid process works!

Although most of the work you will do with your high school counselor about college planning will take place during your junior and senior years, it is never too early to visit with your counselor. Whatever grade you are in *now*, this is the time to start helping your counselor get to know you and your college dreams.

Student Without a School Counselor: If you don't have a school counselor available, ask a teacher you trust to serve as your advisor as you plan for high school and, later, for college.

THE COMMON
APPLICATION

TEACHER EVALUATION

TE

TO THE APPLICANT

After completing all the relevant questions below, give this form to a teacher who has taught you an **academic** subject (for example, English, foreign language, math, science, or social studies). **If applying via mail**, please also give that teacher stamped envelopes addressed to each institution that requires a Teacher Evaluation.

Legal Name _____
Last/Family/Sur (Enter name **exactly** as it appears on official documents.) First/Given Middle (complete) Jr., etc.

Birth Date _____ CAID (Common App ID) _____
mm/dd/yyyy

Address _____
Number & Street Apartment # City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

School you now attend _____ CEEB/ACT Code _____

IMPORTANT PRIVACY NOTICE: By signing this form, I authorize every school that I have attended to release all requested records and recommendations to colleges to which I am applying for admission. I also authorize employees at these colleges to confidentially contact my current and former schools should they have questions about the information submitted on my behalf.

☐ I waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.

☐ I DO NOT waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.

- I have chosen not to waive my right to review my recommendations and supporting documents. I understand that my decision may lead my counselors or teachers to decline to write recommendations on my behalf. I also understand that my decision may lead colleges to disregard any recommendations submitted on my behalf.

I understand that my waiver or no waiver selection above pertains to all colleges to which I apply and that my selections cannot be changed after any recommendation or application submission.

Required Signature _____ Date _____

TO THE TEACHER

The Common Application membership finds candid evaluations helpful in choosing from among highly qualified candidates. You are encouraged to keep this form in your private files for use should the student need additional recommendations. Please submit your references promptly, **and remember to sign below before mailing directly to the college/university admission office. Do not mail this form to The Common Application offices.**

Teacher's Name (Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.) _____ Subject Taught _____
Please print or type

Signature _____ Date _____
mm/dd/yyyy

Secondary School _____

School Address _____
Number & Street City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

Teacher's Telephone (_____) _____ Teacher's E-mail _____
Area/Country/City Code Number Ext.

Background Information

How long have you known this student and in what context? _____

What are the first words that come to your mind to describe this student? _____

In which grade level(s) was the student enrolled when you taught him/her? ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11 ☐ 12 ☐ Other _____

List the courses in which you have taught this student, including the level of course difficulty (AP, IB, accelerated, honors, elective; 100-level, 200-level; etc.).

Ratings Compared to other students in his or her class year, how do you rate this student in terms of:

No basis	Below average	Average	Good (above average)	Very good (well above average)	Excellent (top 10%)	Outstanding (top 5%)	One of the top few I've encountered (top 1%)
☐ Academic achievement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Intellectual promise	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Quality of writing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Creative, original thought	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Productive class discussion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Respect accorded by faculty	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Disciplined work habits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Maturity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Motivation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Integrity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Reaction to setbacks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Concern for others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Self-confidence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Initiative, independence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ OVERALL	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Evaluation Please write whatever you think is important about this student, including a description of academic and personal characteristics, as demonstrated in your classroom. We welcome information that will help us to differentiate this student from others. (Feel free to attach an additional sheet or another reference you may have prepared on behalf of this student.)

SAMPLE APPLICATION
DO NOT MAIL TO COLLEGES

4

Session 4: How Do I Get to College? (Part 1)

Activity #3: Getting Involved

Opening Discussion

Many students aren't aware of the fact that colleges want to see applicants who have been actively involved in high school, either through school related activities or community based commitments. It is important for students to realize before entering high school that each year "counts" and they should plan to get involved early in their freshman year.

Activities/Handouts

Activities Questionnaire**Interests and Related Activities**

Instructions

1. Distribute the "Activities Questionnaire" and students to answer as many questions as they can.
2. Once they have completed the questionnaire, ask the students to find a partner and together decide how they would each fill out the "Interests and Related Activities" chart that will help them to see how their current interests may relate to school or community activities during high school. They may need to do some brainstorming to come up with high school clubs and organizations. Tell them that there are no wrong answers here and that they may have to think creatively to figure out how their interests would translate into something more.
3. Once students have had a chance to complete the chart, ask them to "introduce" their partners to the group and go through each category of interest, so that all can benefit from the observations and questions that arise with this exercise.

Activities Questionnaire

Student Name: _____ Grade: ____ Date: ____

1. What activities do you enjoy outside of the daily routine of school? Why?

2. In what sports or games do you participate? With whom?

3. In what school-sponsored activities have you participated and why did you select these?

4. Have you had any leadership roles on sports teams, in local organizations, religious institutions, youth groups, or school-sponsored activities? If so, what are they?

5. What summer experiences have been particularly important to you? Camps, church, family activities, etc.?

6. What kind of music do you like? Do you play an instrument? Sing? Would you like to? Do you have friends or family members involved with music?

7. Have you been involved with any volunteer or community service work? Why did you do it and what did you learn from it? Would you like to continue this in high school?

Adapted from Cabral, Joshua. "Addressing the Needs of First-Generation, College-Bound Students: A Comprehensive 5th-12th Grade Approach." South Boston Harbor Academy Charter School. 2004

Interests and Related Activities

The following table is to help you focus on your interests and abilities and to determine how you might be able to develop them in high school. Don't be afraid to put down interests that you may not have pursued to date. The future is yours.

Interests and Talents	Current Related Activities	Possible Related High School Activity
<i>(i.e., acting)</i>	<i>(i.e., watching movies)</i>	<i>(i.e., joining the drama club)</i>

Sample activities/clubs available in high school:

- Anime
- Athletics: players, boosters, cheer, managers
- Band
- Choir
- Community service
- Dance groups/teams
- Debate
- DECA
- Dreamers (undocumented students)
- Gay/Straight Alliance
- Key Club
- Language, math, science, or art clubs
- National Honors Society
- Prom committee
- Religious clubs
- Theater/Drama
- Yearbook, school newspaper, literary magazine
- And many more!

(In many high schools, some of the above activities may be classes, but colleges will still consider them activities).

4

Session 4: How Do I Get to College? (Part 1)

Activity #4: Time Management

Opening Discussion

Moving from middle school to high school will give students many more opportunities to be involved in activities. It may also mean students will have more homework and perhaps more responsibilities at home. Learning how to manage their time can be the most important skill for students to learn. In this activity, talk about how students use their time now, whether or not they procrastinate and why.

Activity/Handout

Banking Your Time**Personal Daily Time**

Instructions for Banking Your Time

Game

1. Provide play money (24 bills: \$100 or \$1 bills—or 24 pennies—if nothing else is available).
2. Select a volunteer to come to the front and place all the money in his/her hands.
3. Ask how much time they need each day to do the following, and take \$100 or \$1 or one penny away from him/her for each hour needed:
 - Sleep
 - Shower, dressing, getting ready for school
 - Breakfast
 - Travel to and from school
 - School hours
 - After school sport, activity or job
 - Household chores
 - Homework
 - Dinner
 - TV
 - Personal Time
4. Talk about how they banked their time, compare the things that have to be done to the things that they want to do, and how they can prioritize.
5. Ask students to complete the “Personal Daily Time” chart. Talk about how they are currently using their time and what changes they might make to be a better student.

Personal Daily Time

Code each of the hours with one of the letter codes below.

Sleep—Z Shower, dress, get ready for school—GR Breakfast—B	Travel to and from school—T School day hours— SD	After-school sports, activities, job—AS Household chores—C Homework—HW Study—S	Dinner—D Television—T Personal Time—PT
5 a.m.			
6 a.m.			
7 a.m.			
8 a.m.			
9 a.m.			
10 a.m.			
11 a.m.			
Noon			
1 p.m.			
2 p.m.			
3 p.m.			
4 p.m.			
5 p.m.			
6 p.m.			
7 p.m.			
8 p.m.			
9 p.m.			
10 p.m.			
11 p.m.			

5

Session 5 (Part 2): How Do I Get To College?

In the previous session, students spent time looking at their learning styles, extracurricular possibilities, and course planning for high school, so now it is time for them to gain a clearer understanding of how colleges ultimately look at them as applicants. It is also important for them to understand the role that finances play in their ability to attend college.

Objectives

By the end of this session, students have:

- been introduced to the main factors that colleges are seeking in an applicant
- gained insight into some of the fundamentals of paying for college
- pulled together the information from Sessions 4 and 5 by playing “Step to the Top of Your Class”
- completed an evaluation of the workshop.

Activities/Handouts

Activity #1: What are Colleges Looking For?

Handout: What Matters Most to Colleges

Activity #2: Thinking Ahead: Paying for College

Handouts: Paying for College is a Family Affair, Financial Aid True/False Questions

Activity #3: Putting it all Together

Handout: Step to the Top of the Class

Activity #4: Evaluation

5

Session 5: How Do I Get to College? (Part 2)

Activity #1: What are Colleges Looking For?

Opening Discussion

For students to better understand why they need to plan ahead for their courses, they should have some insight into what colleges are looking for in an applicant. This activity will help them to look at the college application process from the college point of view and to assess how they might “look” to colleges by their senior year.

Activity/Handout

What Matters Most to Colleges

Materials

Poster board or paper,
Tape

Instructions

1. Cut into strips the nine factors listed in “What Matters Most to Colleges” and hand to students (or pairs of students).
2. Ask students to read aloud the factor they have been given and then tape it to the board (or write in on the chart). Briefly discuss each factor and answer appropriate questions.
3. Once all the factors have been placed on the board, ask them what they think they will have the most control over during their high school years. They should make note of those factors and try to set some goals for themselves.
4. End the session with questions and answers.

What Matters Most to Colleges

(CollegeData.com)

How do colleges select students? It's not one of the great mysteries of life—even though it sometimes looks that way. While there is no precise formula for how a student gets admitted to a college, admission departments typically provide their admission criteria. While every college is different, some factors consistently rank as either “Important” or “Very Important.”

Which factors rank as the most important to a college?

Overall high school grades—Your transcript will list every class that you have taken in high school and the grade you received in that class. Colleges will be looking to see whether you took challenging courses or whether you opted for the easier route.

College prep course grades (AP and honors)—For most selective institutions, college prep courses count more than those of regular courses. If your high school doesn't offer those advanced courses, try to take the most challenging courses available.

Standardized test scores—These include the results of the SAT Reasoning Test, the ACT test, the SAT Subject Tests, and Advanced Placement (AP) tests. Colleges will let you know which of these tests you will need to submit. The SAT Reasoning Test and the ACT scores are the two most requested.

Essay—Almost every application will ask you to submit an essay or personal statement based on a question the college provides. You usually choose from several questions. Your essay is your opportunity to put a “personality” behind the application. The essay gives you a chance to say why you want to attend that particular college. A good essay can tip a decision in your favor.

Extracurricular commitment—What you do in your spare time says a lot about you. Maybe you've pursued a sport, spent years developing a talent, or made a strong commitment to work or volunteering. What counts most to colleges, especially highly selective colleges, is how long you have been involved, how much time you allot each week, and whether or not you have taken a role of leadership in your activity.

Demonstrated interest—Whether it's showing up for a college visit, calling admission officers, or an enthusiastic interview, showing that you really want to attend a college can help your chances—especially at private colleges.

Special talent—This is a skill that makes you stand out. Whether it's piano playing or creativity in painting, a special talent could give you a leg up on other candidates, not to mention access to scholarships that list your talent as one qualification. If a college wants a talent you possess, there is no telling what they'll offer.

Letters of recommendation—Although not all colleges ask for them, some colleges require that you ask certain teachers, your high school counselor, and possibly your principal to complete and submit recommendation forms as a testimony of your achievements and capabilities. They are supposed to be letters of praise, so look for faculty with whom you've had a good history, who know you well, and who can vouch for your likelihood of academic success.

Class rank—Class rank shows where you place numerically in your senior class based on your Grade Point Average (GPA). The higher your GPA, the better chance you have of being in a higher rank. Ranking number one or in the top 10 percent in a class of 300 is more impressive than ranking in the same position in a class of 12. However, fewer colleges are giving class rank high importance.

While all of these factors are important, it is up to the college to tell you which are the most important to them. You can see that colleges want more than just test scores and GPAs. They want a student who will be a successful, contributing member of their community.

5

Session 5: How Do I Get to College? (Part 2)

Activity #2: Thinking Ahead— Paying for College

Opening Discussion

Although college may seem far away, it's never too soon to think about the cost and to understand that there is money for those who may think that college isn't affordable. Middle school students should be encouraged to share this section with their families.

Activity/Handout

Financial Aid True/False Quiz

Paying for College is a Family Affair

Instructions

1. Begin with the quiz, ask each student to complete it independently.
2. Discuss the answers to the quiz, explaining as necessary.*
3. Hand out "Paying for College is a Family Affair." Discuss it briefly, and ask the students to take this home to their families.

*Answers to the quiz:

1. False—generate a discussion about learning, having more job/career options, creating more opportunities for yourself
2. False—\$9,650 is the average cost of a public in-state tuition
3. False
4. True and False—talk about the federal government sites, help at the school library and community centers
5. False—talk about two year schools, certificate programs, and military options
6. False—a college graduate will earn almost twice as much
7. True
8. True and False—talk about DI, DII, DIII options
9. False—here is where you can talk about EFC, merit aid, scholarships, aid packages
10. True—talk about co-op options, for example

Financial Aid True/False Quiz

1. College isn't worth the debt involved. It's better to go directly to work. **T | F**
2. Most students attending four-year colleges pay less than \$9,650 to attend school each year. **T | F**
3. Only "A students" can go to college and get financial aid. **T | F**
4. Applying for financial aid is very difficult and complicated. **T | F**
5. To make it in today's world, you must have a four-year degree. **T | F**
6. Over the course of a lifetime, a high school graduate can earn as much as a college graduate. **T | F**
7. The average annual income of a person with a college degree is more than \$55,000. **T | F**
8. Colleges give full athletic scholarships to athletes. **T | F**
9. Private colleges are too expensive and you shouldn't apply if you don't have the money. **T | F**
10. Some employers will help you pay for college. **T | F**

Paying for College Is a Family Affair

Many students who earn admission to college never go because they don't complete the financial aid process. But there are lots of ways to pay for college and lots of information and help are available to students who honestly need financial aid assistance.

Facts:

- The earlier you begin to think about paying for college the better.
- Money is available to almost every student who attends college.
- No one gets financial aid by wishing! You need to apply and follow through.
- Even the most ambitious student will need assistance from the adults in the household to complete the financial aid application process.
- You don't need to pay anyone to help you apply for financial aid! Beware of anyone who offers a service for a fee.
- Often the most expensive colleges have the "deepest pockets" and can help the very neediest students to make college affordable.

In a perfect world, families begin thinking about college finances when their children are still in grade school. But we all know this isn't a perfect world. The time for you to start thinking about paying for college is *today*!

There is a lot of money available to students with need.

While it is true that college costs usually increase each year, it is also true that there is more financial aid available for undergraduates than ever before—according to the College Board, more than \$185 billion (2011–2012). This money comes from the following sources:

- US Department of Education provides about \$150 billion a year in grants, low-interest loans, and work-study assistance.
- State grant and loan programs.
- College and university grant, loan, and scholarship programs.
- Scholarships or grants given by foundations, corporations, and community organizations.
- Aid for the military. For more information, visit <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/military>.

These are the sources of financial aid:

- **Grants and scholarships:** Also called “gift aid,” grants are based on financial need and don’t need to be repaid. Scholarships are most often awarded on the basis of strong academic achievement, a special talent or ability, or personal characteristics.
- **Federal work-study:** This option gives students the opportunity for part-time employment either on campus or off campus at a private, nonprofit organization, or public agency to help them meet their financial need.
- **Loans:** These are offered to students or parents and must be repaid. Loans that are awarded based on financial need are direct subsidized loans, usually sponsored by the federal government. Interest on these loans is paid by the government for students while they are in school. Interest begins accumulating 6 months after graduation. Repayment doesn’t begin until six months after completion of the college program and may be deferred until a later date under some special circumstances.

Applying for financial aid is time-consuming, but not difficult.

There are many people and resources who can help you find your way through the financial aid process. Your school counselor, your teachers, adults in your community, or community organizations may all be available to advise you. At every college you consider, financial aid officers will be eager to help students and families understand and complete the financial aid process. Don’t be afraid to ask a lot of questions.

If you are a good student and an active participant in school and the community, you may qualify for scholarships offered by corporations, foundations, religious organizations, or community groups. Ask at your school about possibilities. Do some research online at Fastweb (www.fastweb.com) and The College Board (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>).

In the end, all of the work required to apply for financial aid is well worth the effort! In 2016, the *Educations Pays* report (by the College Board, based on data from the US Census Bureau) found:

- College graduates (bachelor’s recipients) earned an average of \$61,400.
- High School graduates earned an average of \$36,800.

And this gap continues to grow. Over the course of your life and career that difference will make up for the cost of even the most expensive college—many times over!

5

Session 5: How Do I Get to College? (Part 2)

Activity #3: Putting It All Together

Opening Discussion

This will be the final wrap-up of the workshop, combining many of the issues discussed into a game that illustrates the many factors that colleges consider when making decisions about applicants. The students should be able to see that they have some control over the way colleges view them.

Activities/Handouts

Step to the Top of Your Class

Evaluation

Appendix

Letters

Instructions: Step to the Top of Your Class

Making the game:

Reproduce copies of “class standing” pages, which follow these instructions to prepare participants’ “personal quality” sheets. Use nine differently colored pieces of construction paper. On one side, write the applicable class standing in large numerals with a magic marker. On the same side and on top of the numerals tape the copy of the page with the corresponding class standing at the top and the qualities possessed by the student with that standing underneath. For example: centered at top of page: “#1 in middle school class:” and underneath: “You don’t like science and plan to take the bare minimum of lab science classes.” “You don’t plan to participate in activities while in high school, etc.” The back side of the construction paper (and the side that will face the audience) should remain blank so that those in the audience will lose track of who has what standing during play.

Getting started with play:

You will need nine volunteers to be students about to enter high school. Secure a volunteer to play the “School Principal.” That student reads the qualities and tells students whether to move up or down in the competition. Hand out the class standings in random order and then instruct volunteers to organize themselves in class standing order from highest to lowest. (This is generally a couple of minutes of comedy relief because players have trouble getting organized. This is part of the fun.)

Scenario of play:

The remainder of the group is told that they are the teachers deciding who from the senior class at “All-American High School” (or you pick a more fun name) will be selected to speak at graduation ceremonies. The teachers, along with the principal, are deciding who has “stepped to the top” of their high school class and will be asked to speak at graduation. Before them they see the candidates. Point out that they are standing in order from highest to lowest, based upon how they placed at the end of middle school. Tell them that more than grades will be involved in making this decision.

The personal qualities/qualifications are then read and the volunteers are asked to exchange places (move up and down in the order) based upon what is read. (One very important note to make this work: if more than one student is moving down at the same time, the lowest student must move first and visa versa—if more than one student is moving up, the highest student must move first.) You may choose to alter the qualities/qualifications and the weight given to each.

Stop after each quality read to discuss why this helped or hindered the student. As an example: you may ask, “How do you think it might help you to have a volunteer job in the summer?” Or, “How might studying at the library be helpful in your classes?” This is a way to generate discussion.

The ending:

After all qualities have been read and candidates have been “sorted,” have the participants turn over their top sheet to reveal their original standing and then turn the sheet around to reveal it to the audience. Read through the standings, pointing out the new order and note that the top candidate, newly sorted, will be invited to speak at graduation. Point out to students that many of their personal choices will have an impact on the ways in which they will grow and achieve during their high school years.

At the end of the game you may want to say to everyone participating: “If you are planning a strong high school class load, plan to study regularly, plan to be involved in school activities, save what you can for college, and have your ‘team’ in place to support you for college—you are *all* winners!”

You might choose to have a small prize—like pieces of candy to thank the volunteers.

Step to the Top of Your Class

Qualities, which are read, and designated places to move up and down in the line:

1. IF YOU PLAN TO TAKE THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES REQUIRED BY COLLEGES FOR ADMISSION +2
2. IF YOU PLAN TO GET INVOLVED IN SOME MUSICAL ACTIVITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL +1
3. IF YOU MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR COUNSELOR DURING YOUR FIRST YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL TO LET HER KNOW YOU PLAN TO GO TO COLLEGE +2
4. IF YOU PLAN TO SPEND YOUR SUMMERS "HANGING OUT" -1
5. IF YOU PLAN TO TAKE AT LEAST THREE YEARS OF THE SAME WORLD LANGUAGE IN HIGH SCHOOL +2
6. IF YOU NEVER SPEAK TO YOUR TEACHERS OUTSIDE OF CLASS -2
7. IF YOU SPEND MORE TIME ON THE PHONE AND WATCHING TV THAN YOU DO ON YOUR HOMEWORK -4
8. IF YOU HAVE TALKED TO YOUR FAMILY ABOUT THE FACT THAT YOU WANT TO GO TO COLLEGE AND ASKED FOR THEIR SUPPORT +2
9. IF YOU DON'T LIKE SCIENCE AND PLAN TO TAKE THE BARE MINIMUM OF LAB SCIENCE CLASSES -1
10. IF YOU SPEND MORE TIME THINKING ABOUT YOUR NEXT PARTY THAN YOU DO YOUR NEXT CLASS -1
11. IF YOU STUDY AT LEAST ½ HOUR EACH NIGHT FOR EACH ACADEMIC CLASS YOU ARE TAKING +3
12. IF, INSTEAD OF STUDYING FOR YOUR TEST, YOU COPIED OFF YOUR NEIGHBOR'S PAPER—SIT DOWN, YOU JUST FAILED AN IMPORTANT CLASS THAT YOU NEEDED FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION
13. IF, EVEN THOUGH NO ONE IN YOUR FAMILY HAS GONE TO COLLEGE, YOU ARE DETERMINED TO DO SO +2
14. IF, IN THE SUMMER, YOU GET A VOLUNTEER JOB RELATED TO YOUR CAREER INTEREST +2
15. IF YOU DON'T PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY ACTIVITIES WHILE IN HIGH SCHOOL -3
16. IF YOU PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN A COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT +1
17. IF YOU HAVE A PUBLIC LIBRARY CARD AND VISIT THE LIBRARY FOR A QUIET PLACE TO STUDY +2

18. IF YOU BELONG TO A SPORTS TEAM AND WORK HARD TO DO YOUR BEST +2
19. IF YOU PLAN TO GET A PART-TIME JOB AND SAVE YOUR MONEY FOR A CAR,
INSTEAD OF SAVING MONEY FOR COLLEGE -3
20. IF YOU GOT BEHIND IN ONE OF YOUR CLASSES BUT STAYED AFTER SCHOOL TO
GET EXTRA HELP FROM THE TEACHER +1
21. IF YOU MAKE SURE YOUR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS KNOW HOW YOUR SCHOOL
WORK IS GOING AND REGULARLY SHARE GRADES AND REPORT CARDS WITH
THEM +3
22. IF YOU TAKE SICK DAYS FROM SCHOOL, EVEN WHEN YOU AREN'T SICK -1
23. IF YOU PLAN TO BELONG TO STUDENT GOVERNMENT OR WORK ON THE SCHOOL
PAPER +1

Personal quality sheets follow.

#1 in middle school class:

- YOU DON'T LIKE SCIENCE AND PLAN TO TAKE THE BARE MINIMUM OF LAB SCIENCE CLASSES
 - YOU DON'T PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY ACTIVITIES WHILE IN HIGH SCHOOL
- YOU MAKE SURE YOUR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS KNOW HOW YOUR SCHOOL WORK IS GOING, AND REGULARLY SHARE GRADES AND REPORT CARDS WITH THEM

#2 in middle school class:

- YOU PLAN TO SPEND YOUR SUMMERS “HANGING OUT”
- YOU SPEND MORE TIME THINKING ABOUT YOUR NEXT PARTY THAN YOU DO YOUR NEXT CLASS
- IN THE SUMMER, YOU GET A VOLUNTEER JOB RELATED TO YOUR CAREER INTEREST

#3 in middle school class:

- YOU PLAN TO TAKE THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES REQUIRED BY COLLEGES FOR ADMISSION
- YOU PLAN TO SPEND YOUR SUMMERS “HANGING OUT”
- YOU SPEND MORE TIME ON THE PHONE AND WATCHING TV THAN YOU DO ON YOUR HOMEWORK
 - INSTEAD OF STUDYING FOR YOUR TEST YOU COPIED OFF YOUR NEIGHBOR’S PAPER—SIT DOWN, YOU JUST FAILED AN IMPORTANT CLASS THAT YOU NEEDED FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION

#4 in middle school class:

- YOU PLAN TO GET INVOLVED IN SOME MUSICAL ACTIVITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL
- YOU NEVER SPEAK TO YOUR TEACHERS OUTSIDE OF CLASS
- YOU DON'T LIKE SCIENCE AND PLAN TO TAKE THE BARE MINIMUM OF LAB SCIENCE CLASSES
- YOU TAKE SICK DAYS FROM SCHOOL, EVEN WHEN YOU AREN'T SICK

#5 in middle school class:

- YOU MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR COUNSELOR DURING YOUR FIRST YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL TO LET HER KNOW YOU PLAN TO GO TO COLLEGE
 - YOU SPEND MORE TIME THINKING ABOUT YOUR NEXT PARTY THAN YOU DO YOUR NEXT CLASS
- YOU PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY SERVICE
- YOU PLAN TO GET A PART-TIME JOB AND SAVE MONEY FOR A CAR INSTEAD OF SAVING FOR COLLEGE

#6 in middle school class:

- YOU PLAN TO GET INVOLVED IN SOME MUSICAL ACTIVITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL
- YOU PLAN TO TAKE AT LEAST THREE YEARS OF THE SAME WORLD LANGUAGE IN HIGH SCHOOL
- YOU HAVE TALKED TO YOUR FAMILY ABOUT THE FACT THAT YOU WANT TO GO TO COLLEGE AND ASKED FOR THEIR SUPPORT

#7 in middle school class:

- YOU BELONG TO A SPORTS TEAM AND WORK HARD TO DO YOUR BEST
- YOU PLAN TO TAKE THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES REQUIRED BY COLLEGES OF ADMISSION
- EVEN THOUGH NO ONE IN YOUR FAMILY HAS GONE TO COLLEGE, YOU ARE DETERMINED TO DO SO
- YOU PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

#8 in middle school class:

- YOU STUDY AT LEAST $\frac{1}{2}$ HOUR EACH NIGHT FOR EACH ACADEMIC CLASS YOU ARE TAKING
- YOU BELONG TO A SPORTS TEAM AND WORK HARD TO DO YOUR BEST
- YOU GOT BEHIND IN ONE OF YOUR CLASSES BUT STAYED AFTER SCHOOL TO GET EXTRA HELP FROM THE TEACHER

#9 in middle school class:

- YOU HAVE TALKED TO YOUR FAMILY ABOUT THE FACT THAT YOU WANT TO GO TO COLLEGE AND ASKED FOR THEIR SUPPORT
- YOU HAVE A PUBLIC LIBRARY CARD AND VISIT THE LIBRARY FOR A QUIET PLACE TO STUDY
- YOU PLAN TO BELONG TO STUDENT GOVERNMENT OR WORK ON THE SCHOOL PAPER
- IN THE SUMMER YOU GET A VOLUNTEER JOB RELATED TO YOUR CAREER INTEREST

5

Session 5: How Do I Get to College? (Part 2)

Activity #4: Evaluation

Opening Discussion

As a conclusion to the workshop, ask the students to take time to complete the evaluation at the end of this manual. Encourage them to be honest and thorough because it will help them in the future. Once they have completed the evaluations, give them their certificates, and thank them for their participation.

6

Resources for Middle School: Parent Workshop

Objectives

- To demonstrate the importance of families in student achievement and success
- To provide methods of collaboration between families and schools that foster self-esteem, motivation, and academic achievement

Message

Parents and guardians should have ongoing, direct involvement in the education of their children. In far too many instances, they leave that responsibility to the schools. Consider that students spend a far greater amount of time in the home, the neighborhood, and the community than they spend in the classroom. Students spend half (180 days) their days in school and half out of school. Schools require that the student be in class for only six to seven hours; three-fourths of each school day is spent out of school. By influencing a student's out-of-school time, parents can have a positive impact on their child's experience in school.

Introductions

If *Middle School* is the first workshop that you do for parents and guardians, you will need to use some type of icebreaker technique to introduce yourself, your fellow presenters, and the participants to each other. As participants introduce themselves, have them indicate the names and ages of their children.

The *Step by Step* message is best delivered in an informal, friendly atmosphere where people know one another and where participant interaction is encouraged. Use of name badges to help you and parents and guardians to remember names. Do everything you can to make parents and guardians feel comfortable.

The reasons that many parents don't participate in educational programs can be traced to not feeling welcome or comfortable. Your initial goals are to create a sense of belonging and to encourage participation in the full *Step by Step* workshop offering. Ask the group to consider continuing to meet on their own to extend support to each other.

Discussion Questions

Throughout this section, there are opportunities to repeat the message and use discussion questions to gain parent participation in the workshop. Before they can be effective in helping children become successful in school, family members must first be acknowledged as important care providers, and their personal self-esteem must be addressed. Emphasize that the purpose this workshop is to help parents and guardians learn how to get the most out of school for the benefit of their students.

These questions provide information about participants:

- Why did you come to this workshop? What do you want to learn?
- What aspect of the steps to encourage student achievement do you find most difficult to provide? What is easiest to provide?
- What are some examples of how you helped your students practice good study habits?
- What problems have you experienced in getting your student to study, read, and engage in other educational activities at home?
- Phones, games, and the internet in general are distractions for many students. What other distractions are present in your home or in your community?
- Numerous suggestions have been made today/tonight about helping students with studying or homework. Do you feel comfortable with the roles suggested here for you as a parent or guardian? Have you found any tutors or resources you can share with others?

Activities

Invite educators or community representatives to serve as consultants during the presentation. If your audience is composed of elementary school parents and guardians, you may want to schedule a field trip to the middle/junior high school to learn about the program and courses available there. You may also want to schedule a group visit to the community library. Provide the name of a person who will be their guide and encourage the parents and guardians to take their children along.

Resources

The Help Your Child Learn series is available for free in both English and Spanish from the US Department of Education at www2.ed.gov/parents:

- *Helping Your Child Learn Mathematics*
- *Helping Your Child With Homework*
- *Helping Your Child Series*
- *Homework Tips for Parents*
- *Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE)*
- *Parents Guide to School Success*

For other languages, see “Language Assistance” in the upper right corner, or call 800.872.5327 for help in more than 170 languages.

Steps to Encourage Student Achievement

Step 1: Encourage positive work habits that stress the importance of education

The work habits that parents support at home—such as promptness, respect, responsibility, and interest in school work—easily transfer to the school environment. These positive work habits are also important on the job. When parents demonstrate an enthusiasm for learning, they also stress the importance of education, and completing high school is an important first step to the worlds of work and college.

Step 2: Become involved in school and encourage basic skills

Involvement in children's school work means encouraging basic skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and computer skills. Parents can model effective work habits, encourage the completion of homework, seek helpful resources when necessary, actively participate in decisions that affect the student's academic or educational program, and help find solutions to school problems.

Step 3: Acknowledge success and respect effort

It is important for parents to acknowledge that children in the same family may be different in aptitude, intelligence, and personality. Success is an individual measure, and one's best effort doesn't always mean "A+" grades, so parents should acknowledge and praise each success. When parents express respect for what their child is capable of doing, children learn to value a good effort, and this increases self-esteem and self-respect.

Step 4: Provide an effective place to study, and provide help as needed

Differences in learning styles can affect the ways in which students complete their homework. Establishing a routine, budgeting time effectively, utilizing self-discipline, and providing a quiet place to study are all important elements to success in school. Helping children with homework is an essential activity for parents that may include providing materials and resources. If the subject matter is unfamiliar, consult a teacher or counselor for help. Older students, other parents, or special assistance programs may provide help. Being involved in the child's school activities sends the message that school is important.

Step 5: Encourage extracurricular activities both in and out of school

Extracurricular activities in school and in the community give students an opportunity to express their uniqueness. Encourage your student to participate in sports, school clubs, science fairs, and related activities. Individual activities and interests add to the student's development. Internships, volunteering, or paid employment builds character that prepares students for life in the workplace.

Step 6: Recognize that opportunities to learn are never ending

Help your student to be an active learner. The kitchen at home can be a laboratory for learning about science and mathematics. The newspaper or online news can help students gain a sense of history and social science. Every experience can offer opportunities for symbolic or practical learning. Help students understand that education never stops and that school provides the foundation for future studies and careers.

Each month, take the time to reflect on each step by answering the following:

1. How will I encourage positive work habits that stress the importance of education? _____

2. Is my student involved in school and how will I encourage basic skills? _____

3. How will I acknowledge my student's success and respect his or her effort? _____

4. How will I provide an effective place to study, and how will I provide help as needed? _____

5. Is my student involved in extracurricular activities both in and out of school, and how will I encourage new involvement? _____

6. Do I and does my student recognize that opportunities to learn are never-ending? What new opportunities are in sight? _____

Provide a Constructive Learning Environment at Home

- Determine the physical space where quiet studying can occur.
- Provide the resources (e.g., paper, pens, computer, etc.) that your student will need.
- Establish a routine time for homework and class projects that will allow for balanced leisure activities.
- Promote sound time-management skills, providing attention to all subjects and planning for long-range projects (such as book reports and essays).
- Encourage games and leisure activities that require reasoning, computations, and problem-solving skills. Allow your student to participate in building things, fixing things, cooking, and related tasks.
- Monitor/limit screen time. Encourage activities that compliment the educational experience.

Use school and community resources to ensure student success. Helping your student to use the school or community library is one of the most important things that you can do as a parent. Libraries have more than books—they have computers and audio/video resources, and they host special programs designed to help your child be a better learner. Furthermore, museums, zoos, parks, and other sites are learning laboratories waiting to be explored.

Meet with your student's teachers and counselors. Take an hour at the beginning of the school year to establish these important ties, and check in throughout the year. Email or call when a personal visit isn't possible. Some family members may be intimidated by educators, but this fear is usually unfounded. Teachers, counselors, librarians, and other specialists are there to help, and they look forward to working with you. Approach them and be approachable. Also, grade reports provide an opportunity to check on your child's progress, but don't wait until poor grades are received to check with the school.

Join the parent organization at your school and become involved in the decision-making process. Learn how the school operates and how family members can provide input.

Families and Schools Must Work Together

As a parent or guardian, you have the unique opportunity to provide information and assistance to your student as she or he proceeds through an educational program. You can support and extend the efforts of teachers, counselors, and other school staff to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that help students plan for the remainder of their education, their careers, and their lives. A three-way partnership between home, the school, and the student will advance your student's success in school.

Family Members' Influence Makes a Difference

You can also influence your student's work attitudes and sense of responsibility for doing his or her best in school. Here are some suggestions. Help your student to:

- Feel good about going to school
- Attend school appropriately dressed and in good physical condition (e.g., rested, well-fed, and focused)
- Support school rules and explain the reasons for them
- Always complete homework assignments
- Manage their time wisely. Ask about dates for tests, grade reports, parent conferences, school events, and other activities
- Establish a school and home calendar; place it in a prominent location in the home

Homework/Study Agreement

(to be filled out by student, and signed by both the student and parent/guardian)

I will study _____
(where)

I need: _____
(supplies)

Homework starts at _____
(time)

List long-range projects: _____

Games and leisure activities I'm interested in: _____

Each day I will limit my screen time game time to: _____
(minutes/hours)

Student Signature Date

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Building Self-Esteem and a Positive Self-Image

Your student's success in school is partially related to his or her sense of self-esteem. Ask the school staff to work with you to help raise or maintain your student's level of self-esteem. Below are some suggestions.

- **Encourage**—expect your student to be able, competent, and responsible.
- **Motivate**—reward effort and improvement with enthusiasm.
- **Appreciate**—acknowledge small steps. Focus on successes rather than failures.
- **Listen**—pay attention to your student. Use meals and other “together” times to find out what's happening at school.
- **Help**—set aside time to assist with school work and to practice new and developing skills. Select a study place and set a study time with your student.
- **Guide**—practice consistent discipline and be a positive role model.
- **Participate** and enjoy doing things together (both educational and recreational).
- **Love!**

Preparing for a Rewarding Future

The sound educational habits that students acquire during the elementary and middle grades won't be fully felt until they reach adolescence and adulthood. The importance of good study skills must begin during childhood and be nurtured throughout the school experience. The stronger the student's academic preparation and record of achievement, the greater are his or her chances of high school graduation and of moving on to the college and university experience. The competition of the 21st century will give greater opportunities to those who are best prepared: the students most able to meet the challenges of the classroom. Success in a career is directly related to success in school. The best options will be open to the students with the best preparation. As a parent or guardian, you can ensure a rewarding future by devoting attention now to the building of a sound educational foundation for your student.

Weekly Self-Esteem Checklist

Each week go through this checklist to make sure you are building your student's positive self-image.

- ☐ **Encourage**—give your student at least one encouraging comment per week. Try to cover different areas of his or her life, such as academics, talents, social involvement, etc.
- ☐ **Motivate**—add to your list of ways to reward your student when they accomplishes a goal. For example, consider giving them more decision-making opportunities, support a new interest, or even take them to their favorite restaurant.
- ☐ **Appreciate**—verbally recognize one of your student's weekly accomplishments.
- ☐ **Listen**—schedule time to sit down with your student to find out about the week. Dinner is one of the best times to catch up with your family.
- ☐ **Help**—ask your student weekly if they need help either from you or a tutor.
- ☐ **Guide**—be consistent and reflective. Allow your student to offer criticism.
- ☐ **Participate**—plan one fun activity a week with your student to keep a strong bond during these challenging years.
- ☐ **Love**—if you've completed this list, you've already shown your student love!

Setting the Stage for Dreams to Become Reality

Considering Options

Students can develop the skills and knowledge essential in today's job market by earning a bachelor's degree from a four-year college or university or getting an associate degree from a community, junior, or technical college. Many high schools and employers offer career-focused programs such as Career Technical Education, School-to-Work, and School-to-Career, which are linked to community and technical colleges. These programs encourage students to take occupational or technical courses in high school, but also emphasize the importance of studying core courses in English, math, science, and history. College students learn to express themselves clearly and effectively, to make informed decisions, to solve problems, and to use technology—all essential skills in today's job market.

Parents and guardians can give examples of people they know, either in person or through the media, who have gone to college and emphasize how a college education helped those people to achieve professional and personal goals. For example, Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team. He went to college, played basketball at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, strengthened his athletic skills, received national recognition, and was selected for the NBA. If Jordan hadn't gone to college, he may never have achieved his goal of becoming a star athlete.

Students and families can discuss jobs that require a college education. They can also discuss jobs that don't require a college education, but provide more options if the student goes to college. For example, going to college isn't mandatory to play in the NBA, but athletes who have gone to college have had the opportunity to develop their intellectual and athletic skills, to mature, and to learn how to handle the pressures, money, and other business opportunities of professional athletes.

Students and families may want to talk about people they know who went to college, what those people studied in college, and what they are doing now. Students will discover that college provides opportunities to enhance reading, writing, speaking, computer skills, critical thinking, and problem solving, all of which prepare students for a variety of career choices. The logical conclusion is that planning for college now is smart and will maximize future options.

Benefits of a College Degree

- Going to college provides many academic, professional, and personal options.
- Taking college courses improves reading, speaking, writing, and computer skills while enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Attending college increases earning power.
- Planning now and working hard are essential, and effort now will help to ensure success.

Educational Options

- Four-year public and private colleges and universities—bachelor's/baccalaureate degree
- Two-year public and private junior and community colleges—associate degree
- Technical/vocational/trade schools—certificate, license
- Technical colleges—certificate, license and on-the-job experience

Long-Term Dreams/Goals (Complete with your student.)

Insert items, such as “design clothing,” “draw architectural plans for my dream house,” “play professional sports,” etc.

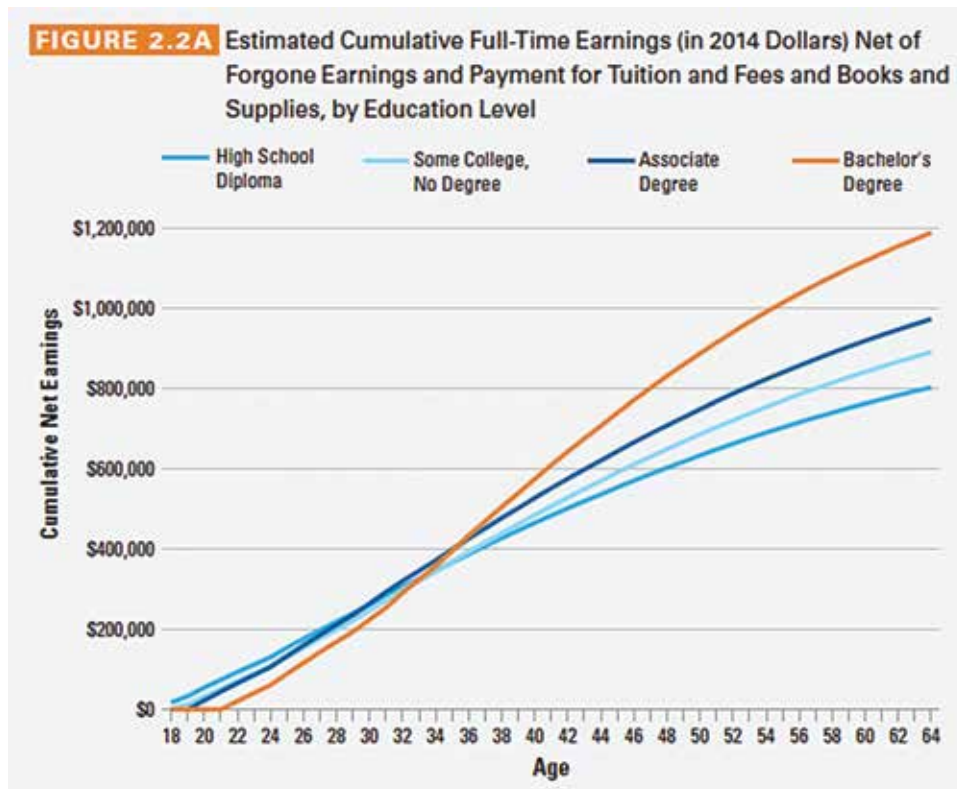
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are the first steps to achieving these goals—list them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

List how a postsecondary education can help fulfill these goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Source: Education Pays 2016 Report, College Board

Educational Options

- Four-year public and private colleges and universities—bachelor's/baccalaureate degree
- Two-year public and private junior and community colleges—associate degree
- Technical/vocational/trade schools—certificate, license
- Technical colleges—certificate, license and on-the-job experience

Benefiting from hard work and recognizing opportunities

Ask parents, guardians, and students to describe a goal they worked to achieve. Then have them explain the benefits of achieving that goal. (They may have earned money or improved grades, gained confidence, made friends, or proved they could accomplish something). Then ask these additional questions about the benefits of their hard work: What did they have to do to achieve the goal? What planning and preparation were required? How did they feel when they achieved their goal?

Benefits of a College Degree

According to the US Census Bureau, in 2016, average earnings whose highest educational attainment was high school were \$35,615 (for ages 25 and older). The average earnings for those with a bachelor's degree were \$65,482. That means that college graduates earn almost double the earning of workers who didn't pursue higher education after high school.

Ensuring Student Success Is a Family Matter

Extensive research confirms that a student's success is dependent on family involvement. Family financial status, parents' educational levels or students' grades don't determine student success in college as much as family involvement. One of the best long-term investments a family can make, therefore, is to be involved in their student's education.

Connecting with Children at Home and at School

Peers and teen culture place pressures on middle school students at a time when they are facing emotional, social, physical, and educational changes. Responsibility for learning is beginning to shift from the teacher to the student. Teens need acceptance and positive self-identity. They also desire independence and maturity. In addition, they are weathering growth spurts, mood swings, and changing educational expectations. Keeping in mind the pressures of this transition, parents and guardians shouldn't expect perfection from their children. Education is a process, and development during the middle school years is rarely linear; there will be ups and downs along the way.

Parents and guardians can help their students to address academic and personal pressures and changes. Setting reasonable limits includes clearly defining acceptable behavior, establishing consequences for unacceptable behavior, and enforcing those consequences. Setting firm, fair limits is one way parents and guardians demonstrate their respect for their children. Help students understand the reasons for the rules, allow them to express their opinions, but hold them accountable for abiding by these rules. As a part of the growth process, students will test their parents' limits, but enforced consequences for rule breaking will help students to be responsible for their own behavior.

Monitoring students' after-school activities helps adolescents make constructive use of their leisure-time and may also help curb inappropriate behavior. Positive school and community activities can enhance personal qualities, develop leadership and teamwork, and define talents and skills. In addition to discussing after school activities, it's important that parents and guardians listen to their students and get to know their students' friends. Acknowledging concerns and worries, exploring solutions, and talking directly about sex, drugs, alcohol, and gangs are ways to communicate positive behaviors, values, and character traits. Promoting honesty, a good work ethic, and responsibility for one's actions are essential for success in and out of school. Parents and guardians should also promote daily physical activity, nutritious meals, and adequate sleep.

Families are the most important influence on children's lives. When it comes to school achievement, the values instilled by parents and guardians are twice as important as family economic or educational background. School counselors, teachers, nurses, and religious and community youth leaders can assist and support parents and guardians in dealing with the pressures and changes adolescents encounter.

Helping Students Cope with Academic and Personal Pressures

At Home:

- Talk with students to help them become aware of stresses, both academic and personal, in their lives
- Offer perspective and focus when young people feel overwhelmed by the physical and emotional changes they are experiencing, and help them understand and address real and perceived pressures
- Discuss college and career options
- Limit distractions when students study (monitor TV, phone, and internet use)
- Encourage time-management skills
- Promote daily physical activity, nutritious meals, and adequate sleep
- Monitor after-school activities
- Clearly state values and acceptable behaviors
- Set healthy limits for children without being too rigid or strict
- Celebrate students' academic and extracurricular successes, and provide positive involvement by attending school and community activities.

At School:

- Ensure that middle and high school students take challenging courses
- Expect the school to have high learning standards and to encourage family involvement
- Keep in touch with the school rather than waiting for a problem to arise
- Use community resources: after-school programs, adult education classes, libraries, athletic programs, religious organizations, etc.
- Expect and ask much of the school, community, and employers
- Celebrate students' academic and extracurricular successes, and provide positive involvement by attending school and community activities.

Family Participation

Parents and guardians need to encourage students to establish high standards, take challenging courses, and use their out-of-school time to develop interests. The positive correlation between achievement in higher-level courses and success on college entrance tests and in college is high. In addition, a positive correlation exists between extracurricular involvement and personal self-satisfaction, positive involvement in college, and even success in the work place.

Families should also have high expectations of the school and community. Programs and services should be offered at a time that is convenient for families and students. Schools should be safe and provide disciplined classroom settings that encourage teaching and learning, and have relevant instruction. Schools should make parents feel welcome, appreciate the vital role that parents play in their children's education, and encourage parental involvement by giving parents a voice in school decisions. Mentoring programs, family resource centers, literacy and adult education, technology that links parents to the school, internships, summer educational and enrichment programs, and exposure to arts and culture are examples of programs and services that could be provided by schools and communities. Employers can take a proactive role in education by donating supplies, expertise, or money; sponsoring career programs; and adopting flexible hours so parents can visit schools.

Connecting to schools may seem overwhelming, but it is crucial because parental participation is vital to students' learning. Education is essential to build the academic skills, character, creativity, and commitment required to master basic and advanced skills, to maximize college and career options, and to develop responsible, compassionate citizens.

Make a list of ways to personalize these tips to best help your student.

Taking the Right Courses for College Begins in Middle School

Core Academic High School Courses

Subject Area	Amount of Study
English	4 years
Science	2–4 years
Biology	
Chemistry	
Physics	
Mathematics	3–4 years
Algebra	
Geometry	
Trigonometry	
Pre-Calculus	
Calculus	
History/Social Studies	2–4 years
World language	2–4 years of same language
<i>Electives</i>	
Computer Science	Technical Education
Music	Art

Planning for college should begin in middle school or earlier. Knowledge and skills acquired in middle school provide the foundation for high school courses and a college education. Challenging middle school and high school courses prepare students for college.

Taking challenging courses in middle school gives students the opportunity to take more advanced courses in high school and college. For example, in math, students who complete algebra I and geometry by the end of ninth grade are much more likely to go to college. By successfully completing those math courses before 10th grade, students can enroll in high school courses in algebra II, trigonometry, precalculus or calculus, biology, chemistry, and physics. In addition, they may qualify for Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses in high school. Students who take AP or IB courses and do well on the AP or IB exams may earn college credit and/or advanced standing in college for work completed in high school. In addition to math, middle school students must study English, science, and history or geography. These courses are the core academic classes students need to maximize their educational options.

In high school, in addition to these core courses, students should study a world language for a minimum of two years of one language; ideally, three or four years of the same language, computer science, and the arts (music, dance, drama, and the visual arts). Learning a world language demonstrates to colleges that students are interested in more than just the core courses and impresses employers with the students' preparation to thrive in a global economy. Many colleges make world language study a requirement for admission.

Students should be well-versed in computer technology by the time they reach college. Use of a computer is vital for today's college student. The computer and the internet are essential for tasks such as writing papers, doing research, enrolling in classes, taking classes online, and communicating with professors and classmates via email.

Participating in drama, vocal or instrumental music, dance, or the visual arts (e.g., painting, drawing, ceramics, photography, film, graphic design) provides valuable experiences and broadens students' understanding and appreciation of the world. The visual and performing arts also contribute significantly to intellectual development and provide excellent extracurricular opportunities for students. There is no substitute for taking rigorous courses in a wide variety of disciplines.

Middle School Schedule of Courses

List names of courses. Use this form to plan which courses to take in the coming years to ensure you meet requirements. Graduation requirements vary by state. Check with your student's school counselor for specifics.

Subject	English	Science	Mathematics	Social Studies	Foreign Language	Elective	Elective	Elective
Eighth Grade								
Seventh Grade								
Sixth Grade								

Creating Academic Portfolios and Developing Extracurricular Interests

The Academic Portfolio

The middle school years are an ideal time to begin an academic portfolio. Students should designate a large file folder, box, drawer, or some other specific place in which to keep samples of their best work in the core academic courses and the arts. Students may also choose to create an electronic portfolio. Examples of what may be included are research papers, creative writing samples, science projects, written copies of oral reports, and artwork. Label each piece of work with the month and year and the name of the course for which the academic work was done. Students may want to include some type of reflection about each project and explain what was learned. In addition, keep a record of any awards or honors and the date received.

When students begin high school, they should start a new academic portfolio that includes samples of their best academic work in high school. They will be able to compare their academic portfolio from middle school with the high school portfolio and see their academic growth. The types of work saved and the importance of identifying each work (with date, course title, and reflection) are the same in middle and high school. Some colleges encourage applicants to submit an academic portfolio as part of the admission process. By saving their work on a regular basis, students will have easy access to their best work along with tangible examples of their hard work throughout middle school and high school.

Academic portfolios for middle school and high school:

- Save samples of student's best work in core academic subjects
- Save samples/take photos of student's best work in the arts
- Record completion date and course title on each work
- Keep everything in a folder or portfolio, including records of any awards or honors and the dates received
- Consider creating an electronic portfolio.

Portfolio

Each month, select a project/test from each subject to keep in the portfolio.

Subject	Date	Description

Extracurricular Interests

The middle school years are also an ideal time for students to explore extracurricular interests, which may include athletics, the arts, student government, school publications, academic projects, religious or civic groups, or community service. Extracurricular activities can be pursued at school, in the community, and through employment and religious or civic organizations. Students also can belong to national organizations, such as religious youth groups, Girl/Boy Scouts, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Jack and Jill. Students may choose to independently develop their own interests.

Being involved in extracurricular activities helps students discover their talents and develop their skills. Extracurricular involvement also builds confidence, creates an identity, and encourages students to see relationships and connections between what they learn in the classroom, their outside activities, and their future employment and leisure activities. Often an activity builds both team and independent skills. For example, students involved in performing arts are part of a team, learning collaboration and team effort on stage, but they also can work independently practicing voice projection, memorization, or posture.

When students discover activities that interest them, they should find more ways to develop those interests. For example, students who like animals might start out caring for their own pets. Based on their experience of caring for their own pets, they can get part-time jobs pet sitting for others, which could lead to employment or an internship in a pet store, with a veterinarian, or at a zoo or aquarium. They also could take courses related to their interest in animals, such as biology, anatomy and physiology, and zoology, and select related topics for research papers, art assignments, and science projects. For example, students could complete a research project about seeing eye dogs or the benefits of pets for elderly and terminally ill people; study the anatomy of a horse and draw horses based on their findings; or conduct scientific research on the effects of caffeine on animals or on the changing habitat of animals indigenous to the rainforest. In this way, extracurricular interests can compliment and strengthen academic work.

Many high schools require students to participate in community service in order to graduate, and colleges often recognize volunteers by considering their service in the admission process or awarding special scholarships to students who volunteer. Volunteering can be year-round and ongoing (working at a hospital, zoo, or shelter for the homeless or tutoring elementary students), during a specific season (teaching physically challenged people to ski or sail), or for a specific event (collecting clothing and food for hurricane victims or running in a fund-raising race to benefit AIDS or cancer patients). Volunteering is a superb way for students to develop their talents and interests and to share and give back to others.

Like their academic portfolio, students in middle school should maintain an extracurricular record that is a list of all their activities at school or in the community; independent activities and projects; community service/volunteer work; and employment. The record should include the beginning and ending dates (month/year) of each activity, positions held (e.g., point guard, varsity basketball; president of religious youth group), and awards or honors (Eagle Scout Award; first chair, trumpet, school band). When students enter high school, they should start a new extracurricular record of high school activities. Students can use their portfolio to develop a resume with the help of their school counselor. Colleges, scholarship committees, employers, and others will request resumes or information about students' after school activities, community service, and employment.

Extracurricular interests and records for middle and high school

- Extracurricular interests enable students to discover their talents and develop their skills
- Interests can develop in athletic, artistic, academic, community service, and other areas
- Students can participate in interests at school, in the community, or at work
- Extracurricular interests build confidence, create an identity, and encourage students to see relationships and connections between what they learn in the classroom, their outside activities, and their future employment and leisure activities
- Extracurricular activities help students learn to work collaboratively and independently
- Students should find more ways to explore their interests because developing extracurricular interests will compliment and strengthen academic work
- Students can share and develop talents and interests by volunteering in their community (community service)
- Students and parents should maintain extracurricular records in middle school and high school
- Students may want to develop a resume and maintain a formal list of extracurricular interests.

Translating Interests into Activities

A student's interests can often be translated into activities. List interests and brainstorm clubs, organizations, teams, etc. to join.

Interests	Related Activities
(i.e., journalism)	(i.e., yearbook)