

The background of the cover features a photograph of a classroom or computer lab. A male teacher in a light blue shirt is leaning over a desk, smiling and pointing at a laptop screen. A female student in a red and white plaid shirt is sitting at the desk, looking at the screen. In the foreground, the back of a female student's head and shoulders is visible as she looks towards the right. The overall scene is brightly lit and conveys a sense of collaborative learning.

NACAC

National Association for
College Admission Counseling

Step by Step: College Awareness and Planning

Early High School Curriculum

Grades 9–11



Introduction

Intervention in the earlier years of high school can put students on a successful path to college attainment and graduation. At this stage, a counselor's role should include:

- Encouraging students to see themselves as college bound
- Instilling the belief that college is accessible and attainable for everyone
- Building a strong foundation for students in and outside of the classroom by helping students choose a college preparatory course schedule in high school and encouraging extracurricular involvement
- Putting together a plan for standardized testing
- Building a student's self-motivation to pursue college and helping him or her build a support network of adult mentors to help reach that goal
- Helping students assess their career interests and aspirations and begin researching colleges to pursue those goals.

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

Early High School Sessions

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Session 1: It Is All About Me! My Future Plans Start Today

The purpose of this session is to encourage students to think about their academic and personal goals for the future, how they can reach them, and why college may be an important step for them to take. With their career goals in mind, the facilitator can demonstrate how higher education fits into their plans. Students will also learn about incentives to attend college, as well as the myths about financial aid.

Objectives

By the end of this session, students will:

- comprehend the importance of good decision-making
- have a better understanding of their short-term and long-term goals
- find that peers with similar interests can help them in the college search/application process
- learn how personal interests and activities can affect their college choices
- understand the personal and financial benefits of postsecondary education
- know how to find answers to questions about college costs.

Activities and Handouts

Activity #1: Common Interests and Connections

Handout: College Bound Bingo

Activity #2: What's Are Your Goals?

Handout: Short- and Long-Term Dreams/Goals

Activity #3: Why College?

Handout: Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 1

Activity #4: College Cost and Increased Earnings

Handout: Financial Aid True/False Quiz

Wrap-Up: Paying for College is a Family Affair and How It Works

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Session 1: It Is All About Me! My Future Plans Start Today

Activity #1: Common Interests and Connections

Opening Discussion

Although the decision to go to college is a very personal one and each student needs to decide what is best for him or her, talking with other students who have similar goals and interests can be very helpful.

Activity/Handout

College Bound Bingo—an ice breaker activity to get the peer conversations started.

Instructions

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

College Bound Bingo

B	I	N	G	O
Does volunteer work	Would like to go out of state for college	Is a ninth grader	Speaks more than one language	Has been on the honor roll at school
Has a leadership role in his/her high school	Is active in a church, temple, or mosque	Wants to attend a small college	Wants to major in English or journalism	Whose parents or sibling attended college
Wants to major in history or psychology	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 attended more than one high school	Plays on a sports team	Has a part-time job	Is a 10th grader	Wants to attend a large university
Plays a musical instrument	Is part of an academic enrichment program outside of school (like Upward Bound)	Whose parents didn't attend college	Wants to attend a community college	Wants to major in math or the sciences

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Session 1: It Is All About Me! My Future Plans Start Today

Activity #2: What Are Your Goals?

Opening Discussion

Ask students to think about their values, skills, and interests as they look ahead to their life after high school. Then, ask them to list many of those options (military, work, trades, college). To focus the attention on the importance of college, ask students to think about lifestyle choices—career, car, house, etc.—and share information about how a two- or four-year college degree can help them reach their goals.

If computers are available, part of the initial discussion should involve searching helpful websites (Center for Student Opportunity and Strive for College's College Center—www.imfirst.org, or College Board and Road Trip Nation's Roadmap to Careers—collegeboard.roadtripnation.com) to show students how to do career and interest searches. Cyber Guidance—www.cyberguidance.net—is a good site that has an excellent section on jobs, what education is required for various jobs, and where certain career interests can lead a student. If computers aren't available, refer students to the websites to visit when they have computer access.

Activity/Handout

Short- and Long-Term Goals

Instructions

1. Distribute the Short- and Long-term Goals handout.
2. Give students 10–15 minutes to complete the sheet individually.
3. Bring the students back together and facilitate a follow up discussion about their responses.

Short- and Long-Term Goals

List your long-term goals, such as “graduate from college,” “design clothing,” “draw architectural plans for my dream house,” “play professional sports,” “become a doctor,” etc.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

List your short-term goals—goals you want to accomplish within a year—such as “arrive at school on time,” “study three hours each night,” “join an extracurricular activity,” etc. (These should help you reach your long-term goals.):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

List how a postsecondary education can help fulfill these goals:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Session 1: It Is All About Me! My Future Plans Start Today

Activity #3: Why College?

Opening Discussion

Once students have an idea of their interests, the next step is to ask, “Why college?” Inform students that it is also very important to think about who will influence their decision about going to college. Yogi Berra once said, “If you don’t know where you’re going, you might end up someplace else.” Have students think about and briefly discuss this quotation as they are determining the *why* and *who*.

Activity/Handout

Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 1

Instructions

1. Distribute the “Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 1” handout.
2. Give students 10–15 minutes to complete the sheet individually.
3. Bring the students back together and facilitate a follow-up discussion about their responses.

Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 1

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ GPA: _____

Why are you going to college?

Check all boxes that apply and add onto the end if there are responses more appropriate for you:

- I'm not ready to get a job yet
- I want to continue my education
- To make more/new friends
- To continue playing a certain sport
- To be with my friends
- To prepare for a career
- To have fun
- My parents insist
- For the personal challenge
- I want to see a different part of the country
- To better humankind
- I don't have anything better to do
- I enjoy learning
- _____
- _____

Who will make the college decision?

Who do you think should make the decision of the college you attend?

- Me. It's my future
- Me, with strong input from my parents
- Me, with some input from my parents
- Parents, with some input from me
- Parents only
- My college counselor
- My advisor/mentor
- My older brothers or sisters who have gone to college
- My friends

Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 1 (page 2)

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ GPA: _____

In the space below, please respond to the following questions. Your responses are for your personal information and college counseling only. Therefore, please respond openly and honestly.

1. In which academic area (math, science, history, English, Spanish, etc.) do you perform the best? Is this subject the easiest for you? Why do you think you perform well in this subject?
2. In which academic area (math, science, history, English, Spanish, etc.) do you perform the worst? Is this subject the most difficult for you? Why do you think you don't do well in this subject?
3. Which academic subject do you enjoy the most? Why do you enjoy it?
4. Which academic subject do you enjoy the least? Why don't you enjoy it?
5. What are your interests outside of school?
6. What's something that you're really good at that no one else knows about?
7. Do you play any sports or are you involved in any clubs or extracurricular activities?
8. In which academic area do others say you do best?
9. What do others say you are good at?

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

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Session 1: It IS all about me! My future plans start today

Activity #4: College Costs and Increased Earnings

Opening Discussion

Going to college can be exciting because students can live away from home, make new friends, and take some amazing courses—remind students, however, that a college degree can give them even more than that. Data show that a college degree correlates with salary ranges. Today, employers use diplomas and degrees more and more to select candidates for jobs. A person with a bachelor's degree will typically earn nearly twice as much per year as a person with a high school diploma. In fact, any education beyond high school (two-year, four-year, vocational or military training) will increase your earnings.

A federal government financial aid publication offers two concrete examples:

- A dental assistant, who must have two years of college, will earn enough money to buy groceries for a week after working only one day. A high school graduate who is a salesperson in a department store would have to work three days to buy the same groceries.
- An accountant with a college degree will earn enough money in a year to buy a four-door compact car, but a high school graduate working as an aerobics instructor would need three years of income to buy the same car.

Activity/Handout

Financial Aid True/False Quiz

Instructions:

1. Distribute the Financial Aid True/False Quiz
2. Give students 5–10 minutes to complete the sheet individually
3. Bring the students back together, review the answers, and facilitate a follow-up discussion about each question.

Here are the answers:

1. False—generate a discussion about learning, having more job/career options, creating more opportunities for yourself, incurring less debt, and getting an enjoyable job that allows you to pay back debt and have the lifestyle you want
2. False
3. True and False—talk about the federal government sites (such as fafsa.gov or www.ed.gov), help at the library and community centers
4. True
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—colleges may give some full scholarships, but most are partial, and some don't give scholarships at all. Discuss the differences among DI, II, III.
9. False—here is where you can talk about EFC, merit aid, 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. Only "A" students can go to college and get financial aid. **T | F**
3. Applying for financial aid is very difficult and complicated. **T | F**
4. College can be expensive, but two-thirds of all undergraduate students receive financial aid to help cover college costs. **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 over \$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**

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Session 1: It Is All About Me! My Future Plans Start Today

Wrap-Up

Keep in Mind

Ensure that students leave the session having a better grasp of their short-term and long-term goals. Knowing these won't only make their path to college easier to facilitate, but will also increase their satisfaction in life. Goals may change over the course of a year, month or even a day. The necessity to continue to analyze, organize, and realize short- and long-term goals always remains the same.

Homework

1. Students should set aside 30 minutes in a quiet space free of distractions.
2. Students should take the full half hour to write a list of things that they want to accomplish in their life. This activity shouldn't be restricted to academic or career achievements. Additionally, students shouldn't be limited by the resources that they have available to them now. Encourage students to *think big and wide*.
3. Students should then take time away from this list and return to it later.
4. When the students return to their lists, they should classify the goals into ones that they can complete while in high school, while in college, and after graduation.
5. Students should think about which goals they can accomplish with or without a college education.
6. Finally, pass out "Paying for College is a Family Affair" for students to take home, read, and discuss with their parents.

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 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 the cost of college usually increases each year, there is more financial aid than ever before. According to the College Board, undergraduate and graduate students received a total of \$240.9 billion in grants from all sources, federal work study, federal loans, and federal tax credits and deductions in the 2015–2016 academic year.

To qualify for financial aid from the federal government, you need to fill out a FAFSA.

Grant money, which is free money for education for students that does not have to be paid back, comes from the following sources:

- 34 percent of grant aid came from the federal government
- 43 percent from colleges and universities
- 14 percent from employers and other private sources
- 8 percent from states.

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 sponsored by the US Department of Education are low-interest loans. Direct Subsidized Loans are a type of loan available to eligible undergraduate students who demonstrate financial need. The US Department of Education pays the interest on a Direct Subsidized Loan while the students are in school and for 6 months post-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.

Easy Steps to Apply for Financial Aid

1. All eligible students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This is the most common application required by many colleges, and should be completed as soon possible after Oct. 1 of your senior year in high school and no later than the priority deadline for each college you apply to. *As the name says, this is free!* The preferred method for completing this form is online, although a paper copy is available. *fafsa.gov*
2. A few colleges and universities also require that students complete a financial aid form specific to the institution, or the College Scholarship Service Profile application, which is offered through the College Board. There is a fee for this form, but fee waivers are available through school counselors and college financial aid offices.
3. Financial aid offices use the information provided through these forms to determine a family's ability to pay for college. This is called the "estimated family contribution" (EFC), and it is always the same, regardless of the cost of the college. Your financial aid offer will cover the difference between your EFC and the cost of attendance for your prospective college. That means that financial aid can help you afford even the most expensive college, if you are admitted.
4. In the spring of the senior year, colleges notify students of the amount and type of aid offered.
5. Students have until May 1 to compare offers of admission and financial aid in order to make one final college enrollment decision.

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 place of worship 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 for lots and lots of help.*

If you are a good student and an active participant in school and 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 *www.fastWeb.com*.

In the end, all of the work required to apply for financial aid is well worth the effort! In 2015:

- College graduates earned an average of \$52,569 in 2016 (NACE's 2016 Salary Survey).
- High school graduates earned an average of \$30,000

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!

For more information on financial aid visit: *www.studentaid.ed.gov* and *www.finaid.org*

Here is how one student financed her first year of college:

Total Cost: **\$21,120**

(Tuition, Room and Board, Books, Fees, Travel)

EFC **\$3,241**

(Estimated Family Contribution as determined by FAFSA)

Financial need: **\$17,879**

How she pays:

Scholarship from college	\$4,000
Federally subsidized student loan	\$3,500
State scholarship	\$2,500
Federal Pell Grant	\$1,060
Federal Perkins Loan	\$2,400
Federal SEOG Grant	\$300
Federal Work Study	\$1,600
Scholarship from church	\$1,500
Summer earnings	\$1,019

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Session 2: There is a College for Everyone!

The purpose of this session is to help students understand that there are numerous college possibilities for all students and that each student will be responsible for identifying their own college options. In this session, students will be encouraged to begin thinking about what characteristics they will look for in a college. Students will be exposed to some of the resources available for college research.

Objectives

By the end of this session, students will:

- 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 types of experiences and opportunities they offer
- have been introduced to some of the resources available for getting to know about colleges
- begin to explore the types of colleges that might be a fit academically, financially, and, socially.

Materials and Handouts

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

Recap Activity: Have students share their lists from their Session 1 homework assignment.

Activity #1: Evaluating Your School Experience to Date

Activity #2: Getting to Know College Possibilities

Handout: Charting Your Course for College—Part 1

Activity #3: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About College but Were Afraid to Ask

Handout: Charting Your Course for College—Part 2

Handout: Doing Your Research

Several college guidebooks and college viewbooks

Activity #4: Using the Internet to Research Colleges

Handout: Websites Focused on College Exploration

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

Wrap-Up

2

Session 2: There is a College for Everyone!

Activity #1: Evaluating Your School Experience to Date

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 have been 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. This is the perfect time to begin thinking about all the possibilities!

Activity/Handout

None

Questions to open up discussion with students:

- How was it decided which high school you would attend?
- What have you liked about your current school?
- What would you change if you could?
- How well do you anticipate that your high school will help you reach your goals?
- If you could choose your high school now, what would you look for?

Instructions

1. Ask students to brainstorm a list of qualities that they believe would make a school a good fit and list these qualities on a blackboard or flipcharts.
2. Have students discuss the qualities on the list and how these might apply to their college search.

2

Session 2: There is a College for Everyone!

Activity #2: Getting to Know College Possibilities

Opening Discussion

Colleges aren't all the same. Each college and university has a different mission. This activity is designed to teach students the different types of higher education opportunities that exist for them after high school.

Activity/Handout

Charting Your Course for College—Part 1

Instructions

1. Give every student the handout, "Charting Your Course for College—Part 1." Allow students a few minutes to read the handout (silently), then review the different types of colleges with the students as a group.
2. Write, as headings, each category of college on the board or flipchart pages.
3. Ask students to suggest names of colleges which they think fit into each category. Help them evaluate each suggested college accurately, and then write the name of the college under the correct heading on blackboard or flipcharts.

Alternate Activity

4. Ask students to suggest people they know who have attended specific colleges. Evaluate which category of college that institution falls under. Write the name of the college under the correct heading on the board or flipcharts.

Charting Your Course for College (Part 1)

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler...
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

—Robert Frost

Few decisions that you will make in your life will seem more important than your choice of a college. In fact, the career paths open to you, many of the friends you will maintain for a lifetime, even the area of the country in which you are likely to live and work will be strongly influenced by your college decision. It is important to remember that choosing a college—or even a list of colleges to apply to—isn't an exact science. There isn't one perfect college for anyone. Instead, there are many colleges that would be a fine fit for every college-bound student. The trick is to identify your unique priorities for selecting a college, carefully research the characteristics of a range of colleges and universities and, finally, make a list of several options to apply to.

Getting Started

As you begin planning for college selection, review your priorities. You will be sitting in the classroom at your final choice, not your parents, and not your best friend. Although it is a good idea to seek advice, especially from teachers or counselors who know colleges well, in the end, no one can tell you where you'll be satisfied and thrive.

A good place to start is by considering what you have and haven't found important and rewarding in your high school experience.

Reflect on these questions:

- How do I learn best? In large or lecture-style classes, or in small discussion/seminar settings?
- Do I prefer being one of the best in a class, or do I need the competition of equally bright peers in order to challenge myself?
- 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?
- What extracurricular activities have been most important to me? Which will I want to continue in college?
- What have I learned about my academic interests and abilities that will influence what I may study in college?
- 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 learned about yourself during your high school years as you set priorities for your college experience.

Before you begin picking college possibilities, it is also a good idea to have a candid conversation with your parents. Are there limits to what they can or will contribute to your college finances? (If your parents are separated or divorced, ask this question of both parents since many colleges will expect a financial contribution from both.) Are there colleges which they hope you will consider? Are they comfortable with allowing you to travel a great distance for college?

If you and your parents are on the same page—great! If not, it is better to negotiate differences of opinion at the beginning of the selection process rather than at the end, when you have selected a college that your parents won't support as a final choice. If you find your parents are too narrowly focused, your counselor may be able to educate them about the wide range of quality colleges. If they are worried about paying for college, your counselor can help them understand the financial aid process.

Considering College Types

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.

Tribal Colleges are similar to HBCU's, focusing on the needs and education of American Indian students.

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.

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Session 2: There is a College for Everyone!

Activity #3: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About College but Were Afraid to Ask

Opening Discussion

In this activity students are encouraged to investigate the many characteristics of colleges and universities that should be considered as they explore options and what constitutes an appropriate “fit.” In addition, students are introduced to reliable resources for college research.

Activity/Handout

Charting Your Course for College—Part 2

Doing Your Research

Several college guidebooks and college viewbooks

Instructions

1. Give every student the handout entitled “Charting Your Course for College—Part 2.”
2. Ask students to brainstorm a list of everything they would want to know about a college before deciding to apply. (For example: Is it in a city or the country? What majors are offered? Does the college have fraternities and sororities?) List these suggestions on a clean blackboard or fresh flipchart pages. Keep prompting until a relatively long list is created. Prompts might include questions like:
 - a. What about a location might make a difference to you?
 - b. What about where you will live at college?
 - c. What kinds of facilities might you want on a campus?
 - d. What will you want to do to have fun?
3. After the list is completed and all responses have been recorded, ask each student to pick the three to five questions that are the most important to them. Check each question picked.
4. Circle the top questions.
5. Ask students where they think they could find information about each topic/quality circled.
6. Introduce students to several good college guidebooks and a sampling of college viewbooks.
7. Divide students into small groups. Give each group at least one guidebook and several college viewbooks. Ask each group to develop a list of information/answers to questions that they were able to locate.
8. Have each group report on what was located.
9. To conclude this activity, distribute “Doing Your Research” to be read at home.

Charting Your Course for College (Part 2)

Here are some other important things to consider in selecting colleges:

Accreditation: The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by colleges and universities meets acceptable levels of quality. Accrediting agencies, which are private educational associations of regional or national scope, develop evaluation criteria and conduct peer evaluations to assess whether or not those criteria are met. To participate in the federal student aid programs, an institution must be accredited by an accrediting agency or state approval agency recognized by the US Secretary of Education as a “reliable authority as to the quality of postsecondary education” within the meaning of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended. This is all very technical, but the bottom line is if a college or university is unaccredited, it won’t be able to offer federal student aid. You should be very cautious about considering a school that doesn’t participate in the federal student aid programs.

Size: The size of a college or university will have an impact upon many of your opportunities and experiences. The range of academic majors offered, the extracurricular possibilities, the amount of personal attention you’ll receive, the number of books in the library, will all be influenced by size.

In considering size, however, it is essential that you look beyond the raw number of students attending. Consider instead, average class size for both first-year students and upperclassmen. Investigate not just the number of faculty, but also how accessible faculty are to students. Perhaps you are considering a small department within a large school or vice versa. Large schools may offer extensive support services for students with special needs or those experiencing difficulty. Smaller schools may not be able to fund similar programs. On the other hand, extra support may not be necessary if faculty members work closely with individual students.

Location: Distance from home may be important to you. Is it important to you to be able to visit home frequently or do you see this as a time to experience a new part of the country? Some of you will prefer an urban environment with access to museums, ethnic food or major league ball games. Others will hope for easy access to outdoor activities or the serenity of a more rural setting.

Programs: If you have a good idea of something specific you want to study in college or a career for which you want to prepare, look for well-respected academic departments in this discipline at the colleges you explore. Talk with professors and students in these departments. Research relative reputation by surveying adults already in the field.

You shouldn’t limit your selection process to academic program issues alone. Studies show that many college students change their college major at least once during their college years. Therefore, it is important to pick a college or university that will offer you many appealing possibilities. Look for unique options such as study abroad, unusual academic calendars, or cooperative education plans, which may enable you to include several paid internships with your classwork.

If you are undecided, relax and pick an academically balanced institution that offers a range of majors and programs. Most colleges offer expert counseling to help the undecided student find a focus.

Campus Life: Be sure that you consider what your experience will be like at a college beyond the classroom.

To grow personally, you will want a reasonable balance between academic rigor and an active social life. Find out what is available in terms of extracurricular activities, athletics, and special interest groups. Does the community surrounding the college offer attractive outlets for students? Are students truly welcomed by the community? Is there an ethnic or religious community in which you can participate? What influence do fraternities and sororities have on campus life?

Colleges will often require that you live in campus housing for one or more years. So, in considering social life, be sure to look carefully at the quality of life in the dormitories. Many colleges now offer residential-life options, such as substance-free dorms and special-interest floors for students who share academic, recreational, or community service interests. Others will offer dormitory-based study assistance, computer facilities, and counseling services. Ask if housing is guaranteed to be available to returning students. If so, how are dormitory assignments made after the first year?

Cost: Today's price-tag for a college education has made cost an important consideration for most students. At the same time, virtually all colleges work very hard to ensure that academically qualified students from every economic circumstance can find the financial aid that will allow them to attend. In considering cost, look beyond the price-tag to financial assistance that may be available. Decide the value of a desired educational experience and how much sacrifice (usually in terms of work and loan) you are willing to make to obtain your goals. Work closely with the financial aid officers at the colleges to which you apply.

Diversity: You will learn much from your college classmates every day—in the classroom and in activities. Many graduates note that this was an important consideration in their college choice. Consider geographic, ethnic, racial, and religious diversity of the student body as ways of assessing your future learning opportunities.

Retention and Graduation Rates: One of the best ways to measure the quality of a college or university and the satisfaction of its students is by learning the percentage of students who return after the first year and the percentage of entering students who remain to graduate. Comparatively good retention and graduation rates are indicators that:

- A college and a majority of its students fit
- Sufficient classes and academic programs are available
- Responsible academic, social, and financial support systems exist for most students.

Visit <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator> or www.collegeresults.org locate the information above by school.

Doing Your Research

Today, there are so many resources available to students looking at colleges that it is hard to know where to start. If you are determined to do a thorough job of researching colleges, you will want to use several of the following resources:

College Fairs and Open Houses: Watch the bulletin boards at your school for announcements of area-wide college fairs or open houses hosted on college campuses. The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) holds large college fairs in many large cities throughout the country. In addition to the general fairs, NACAC hosts college fairs specifically for students interested in visual and performing arts, and STEM. You may find information about the dates and locations of NACAC fairs at www.nacacfairs.org. At a fair you will have an opportunity to meet and talk with representatives from many colleges and universities, ask questions which are specific to your search, and get on mailing lists for applications.

College Guidebooks: Students often begin with one or two of the many college guides. Excellent and objective resources include *The College Handbook*, published by the College Board, and *Peterson's Guide to Four Year Colleges*, to name only two of the better known. These comprehensive references contain all of the data needed to answer most of your factual questions. Guides which address, in addition, quality of life issues and are based on surveys of enrolled students, offer subjective information. These include *The Fiske Guide to Colleges* and *The Insider's Guide* that is published by the Yale Daily News. If you want to get specific information about which colleges offer certain majors, the College Board's *Index of College Majors* is a good starting place. Ratings of specific academic programs, though also subjective in nature, can be found in resources such as *Rugg's Recommendations on the Colleges*. Most public and many school libraries keep copies of these guidebooks on shelves.

Beware of rankings that appear to make sweeping comparisons of the quality of entire institutions. You should know that these rankings are often based on data reported by the colleges themselves, the accuracy of which has recently been questioned. Such rankings often weigh factors, like acceptance rate of applicants or average faculty salaries, which have little demonstrable relationship to the quality of an undergraduate's education. Remember that all colleges have academic programs of varying strength.

College-produced Resources: Colleges will shower you with publications once you show any interest. Glossy viewbooks give a brief glimpse of campus, majors, student life, and the admission process. Don't ignore the college's website as a source of information. It is the definitive place to:

- look for application deadlines and requirements
- see the breadth and depth of classes offered in your areas of interest
- find a comprehensive list of scholarships offered
- discover the academic credentials of faculty members
- graduation requirements.

Online Resources: The web has had a significant impact on the type and availability of college resources. Check with your school counselor for a list of reliable sites. US Government, state government, and NACAC resources can always be trusted. Additionally, there are several reliable sites run by NACAC member organizations.

People Resources: Your school counselor will help you assess your qualifications for a range of postsecondary options and share the experiences of students from your school who have attended various institutions.

Plan to meet with college admission officers if they visit your school in the spring and fall.

Be prepared with questions that go beyond information you can look up on the internet. Ask about student satisfaction, retention, campus safety, support services, etc. Feel free to follow up with this admission representative.

Alumni of your school, who are attending or have graduated from colleges that you are considering, will be an excellent source of information. Because they are likely to have entered college with a background similar to yours, their experiences are particularly meaningful.

Talk to people who are working in careers to which you aspire. Ask for their recommendations about college programs and preparation paths. Many professional associations provide resources to students preparing for specific vocations.

Campus Visits: The very best way to gain first-hand knowledge of a college or university is to visit. At a minimum, make some visits to colleges and universities in your local area, which vary in size and kind. This will give you a baseline for judging the kind of environment you are seeking. It is very important that you visit the college you think you will attend before making a final commitment. Arrange through the admission office to visit classes and stay in a residence hall, if possible.

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Session 2: There is a College for Everyone!

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

Activity/Handout

Websites Focused on College Exploration

Materials

Computers, if possible. Alternatively, you may want to photocopy examples of web pages.

Instructions

1. Distribute Websites Focused on College Exploration
2. Explain the difference between free websites and those which charge fees for use.
3. If a interactive whiteboard or projector is available, walk students through one of the websites. Alternatively, use photocopied web pages to talk about the kinds of information available on exploration websites.
4. Encourage students to use computers at school, the library, and home to begin researching colleges and determine 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>

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Session 2: There is a College for Everyone!

Wrap-Up

Keep in Mind

No two schools are exactly alike. Students need to know that each college presents a different opportunity and a new way to grow. Because colleges can differ greatly, students should be strongly encouraged to research a variety of schools, and they should be aware that there are a multitude of resources designed to help them do so.

Homework

1. Instruct students to read the “Doing Your Research” handout prior to the next session.
2. Upon reading “Doing Your Research,” students should pick one or two of the resources mentioned on the handout to find out more information about one college that currently interests them. Public and school libraries are a good place to access computers and/or college guidebooks and college viewbooks.
3. Students should then record three pieces of interesting information about their chosen college in their notebook and be prepared to discuss their findings with the group.

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Session 3: Going to College Starts Now: Curriculum and Testing

The purpose of this session is to impress upon the students that they must begin now to maximize their potential for admission to the appropriate colleges. They should understand they are in the driver's seat and can truly chart their course for the future. By learning more about selecting a college prep course of study and learning about the types of standardized tests they should consider taking, students will be better prepared to apply to college when they reach senior year.

Objectives

By the end of this session, students will:

- understand all components necessary for a college prep curriculum
- have made a tentative course plan for high school
- understand how testing impacts admission, which tests to take, and when.

Activities/Handouts

Recap Activity: Have students share some of the information that they discovered while researching a college through their "Doing Your Research" Activity.

Activity #1: Planning Your College Preparatory Course of Study

Handouts: High School Classes Open the Doors to College; What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College?

Activity #2: Standardized Testing

Handout: Standardized Tests

Activity #3: Practice SAT and ACT Questions

Handout: Sample SAT and ACT Questions and Explanations

Wrap-Up

3

Session 3: Going to College Starts Now: Curriculum and Testing

Activity #1: Planning Your College Preparatory Course of Study

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.

Activity/Handout

High School Classes Open the Doors to College What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College?

Instructions

1. Distribute handout: “High School Classes Open the Doors to College,” and activity sheet: “What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College?”
2. After allowing students time to read and consider the handout, have them to individually complete the activity sheet. (About 15 minutes.)
3. Divide students into small groups to compare responses.
4. Allow small groups 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?
5. Answer any questions.

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, 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, taken in this order:
 1. Pre-algebra
 2. Algebra
 3. Geometry
 4. Algebra II and/or trigonometry
 5. Precalculus
 6. 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 that the math classes required in college will 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 a 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 throughout high school can help you to develop a special talent that will make you a highly qualified applicant.

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 which 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 college preparation	State universities and other selective college requirements	Highly selective college recommendations (Honors and AP levels when possible)	My courses to date*:	I need to take:
English (with an emphasis on reading and writing)	4 years	4 years	4 years		
Math	3 years, including algebra, geometry and advanced algebra	4 years, including algebra, geometry and advanced algebra	4 years, including algebra, geometry and advanced algebra		
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	2-3 years, including 1 year of US History and 1-2 years from other social sciences		
Science	2 years of lab science: Biology, Chemistry, or Physics	2-3 years of lab science: Biology, Chemistry, or Physics	3-4 years of lab science: Biology, Chemistry, or Physics		
World language	2 years of the same foreign language	3 years of the same foreign language	4 years of the same foreign language		

*Record date and semester

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Session 3: Going to College Starts Now: Curriculum and Testing

Activity #2: Standardized Testing

Opening Discussion

Since standardized testing is required for admission to many colleges and is used to qualify for many scholarships, all students should be sure to take the SAT and/or ACT at least once. Preparation is recommended for both tests. Both companies offer free materials to help with that preparation (online information is available through www.actstudent.org and www.sat.org/practice or through bulletins available in the counseling office). The more students read, the more familiar they will be with the test, and the better the results will be. Many students will have the ability to take the PreACT and/or PSAT/NMSQT through their schools and should take advantage of that opportunity.

The College Board also offers the PSAT 10 for 10th graders, which is the same test as the PSAT/MNSQT, but offered at a different time of the year, as well as the PSAT 8/9 for eighth and ninth graders.

The ACT also offers Aspire, a college readiness test aimed at early high school students (through grade 10).

Activity/Handout

Standardized Tests

Instructions

1. Ask the students to look over the Standardized Tests handout and write down any questions they might have.
2. Once they have each had an opportunity to read and think about the handout, ask them to share their questions.
3. If there is a computer available, show the students the College Board and ACT sites—particularly the site for registering for the SAT and ACT.
4. If you don't have computer access, try to print out the College Board and ACT homepages to show students what they look like.

Standardized Tests

Their names can sometimes sound like alphabet soup, but the standardized tests you will take in high school are important for college. Some schools require different tests, so you want to make sure to check with each one about their requirements. Here are the main tests you may have to take if you want to apply to most colleges:

ACT Tests

ACT Aspire: The ACT Aspire (early high school) is an assessment system that measures academic achievement in English, math, reading, science, and writing. ACT Aspire is linked to the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards.

When do I take the test? ACT Aspire assessments begin at grade 3 and are available through grade 10.

How do I register? ACT Aspire is usually administered by your school. See your school counselor for more information.

What is the test's structure?

English: 50 questions (45 minutes); Math: 38 questions (75 minutes); Reading: 24 questions (65 minutes);
Science: 32 questions (60 minutes)

PreACT: PreACT provides 10th grade students with a unique practice experience for taking the ACT test. Results give students and educators valuable insights into predicted performance on the ACT and career interest information to help students plan for a future that aligns with their interests.

When do I take the test? The PreACT is normally taken in the 10th grade.

How do I register? The PreACT is administered by your school. See your school counselor or visit www.act.org/preact for more information.

What is the test's structure?

English: 45 questions (30 minutes); Math: 36 questions (40 minutes); Reading: 25 questions (30 minutes);
Science: 30 questions (30 minutes)

ACT: The ACT test is a curriculum- and standards-based educational and career planning tool that assesses students' academic readiness for college. It is often used for college admission decisions and the results are universally accepted. The ACT can also be used for course placement and to determine eligibility for participation in collegiate athletics (NCAA & NAIA).

When do I take the test? The ACT is offered nationally six times throughout the school year, though some schools, districts, and states have arranged for the test to be administered at additional times during the school year. The ACT tests the material students have learned in high school courses, so it is best to take the test during the spring of the junior year.

When and how do I register? Register online at www.actstudent.org for one of the six national ACT test dates, or work directly with the high school counseling office for tests that are part of school/district/state programs. Be mindful of registration deadlines as they are generally one month in advance. It is suggested that students register at least six weeks prior to the test. Students should decide whether or not to take the optional writing test based on the requirements of the colleges they are applying to or considering. Some schools require it.

Fee waivers for the ACT test are available for economically disadvantaged students. Fee waivers cover the registration fee (with or without writing) plus free access to all premier test preparation services (ACT Online Prep

as well as ACT Kaplan Online Prep Live). More details can be found online or through a school counselor.

What is the test's structure? The ACT consists of four multiple-choice subject tests in English, math, reading, and science. An optional writing test is also offered.

English: 75 questions (45 minutes); Math: 60 questions (60 minutes); Reading: 40 questions (35 minutes); Science: 40 questions (35 minutes); Writing: 1 writing prompt (40 minutes)

How is it scored? Each subject test is scored on a 1-36 scale. The average of these four scores represents the composite score. The optional writing essay is scored by two trained readers on four writing domains (Ideas and Analysis, Development and Support, Organization, and Language Use and Conventions) and scores are on a 2-12 scale. Taking the writing test does not affect your subject area scores or the composite score.

All ACT information is online at www.actstudent.org.

The College Board's SAT Suite of Assessments (SAT, PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 10, PSAT 8/9)

PSAT 8/9: The PSAT 8/9 tests the same skills and knowledge as the SAT, PSAT/NMSQT, and PSAT 10 — in a way that makes sense for ninth graders. The PSAT 8/9 also gives you a chance to preview and practice for the SAT, PSAT/NMSQT, and PSAT 10, and connect to AP courses.

When do I take the test? Students take the PSAT 8/9 in eighth or ninth grade. You would be taking the ninth grade test. Ask your school counselor when your class is taking the PSAT 8/9.

How do I register? Ask your counselor if you are registered to take the PSAT 8/9, and for any details regarding fee waiver opportunities.

What is the test's structure? The PSAT 8/9 consists of one 55-minute Reading component, one 30-minute Writing and Language component, and one 60-minute Math component.

PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT The PSAT 10 and the PSAT/NMSQT are the same test, offered at different times of year. They test the same skills and knowledge as the SAT in a way that makes sense for 10th- and 11th- graders. The tests are great practice for the SAT. The tests also connect you to AP courses, and scholarship programs. Although both tests are used by scholarship programs to find eligible students, only the PSAT/NMSQT qualifies eligible students for the National Merit® Scholarship Program.

When do I take the test? The PSAT 10 is offered to 10th-graders in the spring, while the PSAT/NMSQT is offered to 10th- and 11th-graders in the fall. Ask your counselor for details on which test you'll take and when.

How do I register? Ask your school counselor when your class is taking the PSAT 10 or the PSAT/NMSQT. There is a fee associated with the PSAT 10 and the PSAT/NMSQT, but some schools cover all or part of the cost for their students. For details, ask your counselor.

What is the test's structure? The PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT consist of one 60-minute Reading component, one 35-minute Writing and Language component, and one 70-minute Math component.

How is the test scored? The PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT are scored on the same scale as all tests in the SAT Suite of Assessments. This provides a clear, early picture of you and your readiness for college. Each section is scored 160-760 for a composite score, the highest possible score is a 1520.

To learn more about how these tests align with the others in the SAT Suite, visit: <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/about/scores/structure>

SAT: The SAT is a standardized test used by colleges as part of their admission requirements. The SAT measures the skills and knowledge essential for success in college—reading, mathematics, and writing and language. The SAT is often used to determine eligibility for scholarships and is required by the NCAA for those athletes who hope to compete in college.

The SAT reflects what you're learning in class, and serves as evidence of the hard work you do in high school. Combined with your high school grades and other factors, the SAT gives you an opportunity to put your best foot forward in the college admission process.

When do I take the test? The SAT is administered every August, October, November, December, March, May, and June of each school year.

Most students take the SAT during the second semester of their junior year and/or the first semester of their senior year. The best rule of thumb with the SAT is the earlier and more often the better.

When and how do I register? A registration packet should be available at your high school, but you may also register online at www.collegeboard.org. Keep in mind the registration deadlines for each test, as they are generally one month in advance, but it is suggested that you register at least six weeks prior to the test. If you're eligible for a fee waiver, you can take the SAT or SAT Subject Tests for free—and apply for free to four colleges.

What is the test's structure? The SAT is a three hour test, plus 50 minutes with the optional Essay. There are two sections: the Evidence-based Reading and Writing section (including 65 minutes of Reading questions, and one 35 minutes of Writing and Language questions), and the Math section (including 80 minutes of Math questions).

How is it scored? There are two section scores—one for the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section and one for the math section. The section scores range from 200–800 points. These scores are then combined, and the highest possible total score is 1600. Essay scores range from 2–8 on each of three dimensions (Reading, Analysis, and Writing). The Essay results are reported separately.

All SAT test dates, fee information, and registration information can be found at www.sat.org.

SAT Subject Tests: The SAT Subject Tests are college admission exams on specific subjects. There are 20 SAT Subject Tests in five general subject areas: English, history, languages, mathematics, and science. Many colleges use the Subject Tests for admission, for course placement, and to advise students about course selection, but only some require them.

When do I take the test? SAT Subject Tests are generally given six times in any given school year, on the same days and in the same test centers as the SAT—but not all 20 tests are offered on every SAT date. You cannot take the SAT and a SAT Subject Test on the same day. To find out when specific tests will be given, please visit: www.sat.org/subject-dates.

When and how do I register? A registration packet should be available at your high school, but you may also register online at www.collegeboard.org. The registration deadlines for each test are generally one month in advance, but it is suggested that you register at least six weeks prior to the test. While there are costs associated with taking the test, students who require financial assistance may qualify for fee waivers. For more information, visit www.sat.org/fee-waivers.

What is the test's structure? Subject Tests test you on your knowledge of specific subjects on a high school level. Each Subject Test is an hour long and features multiple-choice questions.

How is it scored? The SAT Subject Tests are scored on a 200–800 scale.

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Session 3: Going to College Starts Now: Curriculum and Testing

Activity #3: Practicing the SAT and ACT

Opening Discussion

Standardized tests aren't fun for anyone. But the name of the game is "practice." With practice you will become more comfortable with the test and score better when it comes time to take the actual test.

Activity/Handout

Sample SAT Questions and Explanations

Sample ACT Questions and Explanations

Instructions

1. Divide the students into groups of three and tell them that they will be receiving three practice SAT and two practice ACT questions.
2. Tell the groups that they have 10 minutes to find the answer to the questions and will receive 5 points for each right answer.
3. The group with the most points will get to explain how they solved the problems. Let them see how closely their explanations match the ones provided by the College Board and ACT.

Note: The ACT handout includes the questions and answers on the same page. Make a copy for the groups the explanation covered. Depending upon the academic level of the students, the counselor may want to find more difficult questions by visiting www.collegeboard.org/sample-questions for SAT samples or www.actstudent.org for ACT questions.

Wrap-Up Discussion

Remind students that practice is the best way to do their best on any test. If desired, bring sample questions to each subsequent session for this group. With the close of the topic of testing, remind the students that tests are only a small part of the college application and that in the following sessions they will learn about other important aspects of the application process, like the importance of extracurricular activities.

Sample SAT Questions

Evidence-Based Reading and Writing

A subway system is expanded to provide service to a growing suburb. A bike-sharing program is adopted to encourage nonmotorized transportation. To alleviate rush hour traffic jams in a congested downtown area, stoplight timing is coordinated. When any one of these changes occur, it is likely the result of careful analysis conducted by transportation planners.

Which choice for the underlined section best maintains the sentence pattern already established in the paragraph?

- a) No change.
- b) Coordinating stoplight timing can help alleviate rush hour traffic jams in a congested downtown area.
- c) Stoplight timing is coordinated to alleviate rush hour traffic jams in a congested downtown area.
- d) In a congested downtown area, stoplight timing is coordinated to alleviate rush hour traffic jams.

Note: The passage and question set has been excerpted from the original.

Math Question #1

The mean number of students per classroom, y , at Central High School can be estimated using the equation $y = 0.8636x + 27.227$ where x represents the number of years since 2004 and $x \leq 10$. Which of the following statements is the best interpretation of the number 0.8636 in the context of this problem?

Select an Answer

- A) The estimated mean number of students per classroom in 2004
- B) The estimated mean number of students per classroom in 2014
- C) The estimated yearly decrease in the mean number of students per classroom
- D) The estimated yearly increase in the mean number of students per classroom

Math Question #2

If $-\frac{9}{5} < -3t + 1 < -\frac{7}{4}$, what is one possible value of $9t - 3$?

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Sample SAT Explanations

Explanation of Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Question

Choice C is the best answer because it most closely maintains the sentence pattern established by the two preceding sentences, which begin with a noun and passive verb phrase (“A subway system is expanded,” “A bike-sharing program is adopted”).

Explanation of Math Question #1:

The correct answer is Choice D. When an equation is written in the form $y = mx + b$, the coefficient of the x -term (in this case 0.8636) is the slope. The slope of a linear equation gives the amount that the mean number of students per classroom (represented by y) changes per year (represented by x).

Choice A isn't the correct answer. This answer may result from a misunderstanding of slope and y -intercept. The y -intercept of the equation represents the estimated mean number of students per classroom in 2004.

Choice B isn't the correct answer. This answer may result from a misunderstanding of the limitations of the model. Students may see that $x \leq 10$ and erroneously use this statement to determine that the model finds the mean number of students in 2014.

Choice C isn't the correct answer. This answer may result from a misunderstanding of slope. The student recognizes that slope models the rate of change, but may think that a slope of less than 1 represents a decreasing function.

Explanation of Math Question #2:

Any value greater than $\frac{2}{4}$ and less than $\frac{2}{5}$ is correct.

Recognizing the structure of this inequality provides one solution strategy. With this strategy, a student will look at the relationship between $-3t + 1$ and $9t - 3$ and recognize that the latter is -3 multiplied by the former.

Multiplying all parts of the inequality by -3 reverses the inequality signs, resulting in $\frac{2}{5} > 9t - 3 > \frac{2}{4}$ or rather $\frac{2}{4} < 9t - 3 < \frac{2}{5}$ when written with increasing values from left to right. Any value greater than $\frac{2}{4}$ and less than $\frac{2}{5}$ is correct.

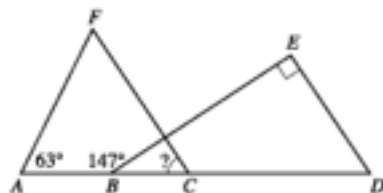
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Sample ACT Questions and Explanations

Math

In the figure below, A, B, C, and D are collinear, FC is parallel to ED, BE is perpendicular to ED, and the measures of $\angle FAB$ and $\angle EBA$ are as marked. What is the measure of $\angle FCB$?



Individual Question

- A. 33°
- B. 57°
- C. 63°
- D. 84°
- E. Cannot be determined from the given information

Explanation of Math Question

B is the correct answer. Since FC and ED are two parallel line segments cut by transversal BE, $\angle E$ and $\angle BGC$ are corresponding angles. So, the measure of $\angle BGC$ is 90° . Since $\angle ABG$ and $\angle GBC$ are supplementary angles, the measure of $\angle GBC = 180^\circ - 147^\circ = 33^\circ$. Looking at $\triangle BGC$, the sum of the measures of angles $\angle GCB$, $\angle BGC$, and $\angle GBC$ is 180° . So, the measure of $\angle GCB + 90^\circ + 33^\circ = 180^\circ$, or $180^\circ - 90^\circ - 33^\circ = 57^\circ$.

Science

PASSAGE IV

Spent fuel (SF), a radioactive waste, is often buried underground in canisters for disposal. As it decays, SF generates high heat and raises the temperature of the surrounding rock, which may expand and crack, allowing radioactivity to escape into the environment. Scientists wanted to determine which of 4 rock types—rock salt, granite, basalt, or shale—would be least affected by the heat from SF. The thermal conductivity (how well heat is conducted through a material) and heating trends of the 4 rock types were studied.

Study 1

Fifty holes, each 0.5 m across and 20 m deep, were dug into each of the following: a rock salt deposit, granite bedrock, basalt bedrock, and shale bedrock. A stainless steel canister containing 0.4 metric tons of SF was buried in each hole. The rock temperature was measured next to each canister after 1 year had passed. The results are shown in Table 1, along with the typical thermal conductivity of each rock type, in Watts per meter per $^\circ\text{C}$ ($\text{W}/\text{m}^\circ\text{C}$), at 25°C . The higher the thermal conductivity, the more quickly heat is conducted through the rock and away from the canisters.

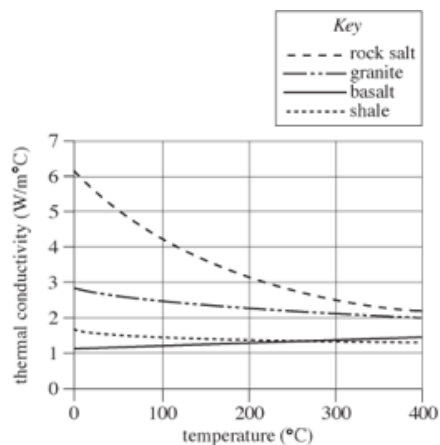
Table 1

Rock	Thermal conductivity ($\text{W}/\text{m}^\circ\text{C}$)	Rock temperature ($^\circ\text{C}$)*
Rock salt	5.70	110
Granite	2.80	121
Basalt	1.26	165
Shale	1.57	146

*All rock types had an initial temperature of 10°C .

Study 2

The scientists determined the thermal conductivity of the 4 rock types at a number of different temperatures between 0°C and 400°C. The results are shown in Figure 1.

**Study 3**

The scientists calculated the temperature increase that would be expected over a period of 100,000 yr in each rock type at a point within a site holding buried SF. The results are shown in Figure 2.

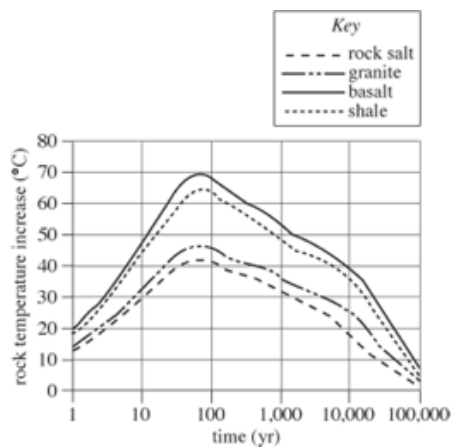


Table and figures adapted from J. S. Y. Wang, D. C. Mangold, and C. F. Tsang, "Thermal Impact of Waste Emplacement and Surface Cooling Associated with Geologic Disposal of High-Level Nuclear Waste." ©1988 by Springer-Verlag New York Inc.

According to Study 2, the thermal conductivity of rock salt measured at a temperature of 500°C would be closest to which of the following values?

Individual Question

- A. 1.0 W/m°C
- B. 2.0 W/m°C
- C. 3.5 W/m°C
- D. 4.0 W/m°C

Explanation of Science Question

B is the best answer. In Study 2, as temperature increased from 0°C to 400°C, thermal conductivity of rock salt decreased from about 6.1 W/m°C to about 2.2 W/m°C. In addition, the rate of the decrease slowed as temperature increased. For example, as temperature increased from 300°C to 400°C, thermal conductivity decreased by about 0.4 W/m°C (from about 2.6 W/m°C to about 2.2 W/m°C). Based on this trend, thermal conductivity at 500°C would be about 0.2 W/m°C less than the thermal conductivity at 400°C (2.2 W/m°C). So, the best estimate is 2.0 W/m°C.

3

Session 3: Going to College Starts Now: Curriculum and Testing

Wrap-Up

Keep in Mind

There is no day better than today to start preparing for college. As early as ninth grade, students should begin college prep programs, choosing classes that make them stand out during the application process and prepare them for college level courses. Additionally, students need to prepare for and take the SAT or ACT, as these tests are mandatory to gain entry to most colleges.

Homework

1. Inform students that they have already begun the first stage of their homework with their “What Classes Will You Take to Prepare You for College?” handouts.
2. Provide students with a list of course offerings at your high school. Instruct students to plan what they think their schedules should look like next year based on the classes that they still need/would like to take. Although the assignment only calls for a plan for one year, students may plan until the end of high school.
3. Additionally, students are to incorporate into their schedules standardized testing. Which test(s) should they be focusing on next year (PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 10, ACT, SAT) and when should they take it?
4. While students should refer back to the handouts that they received during this session to assist with completion of this assignment, encourage students to talk with their own school counselors (when possible) to assess and plan their options for the next school year.

4

Session 4: Going to College Starts Now: Extracurricular Interests and Activities

Students often believe their grades and test scores are all that colleges look for in determining admission, but they need to understand that in many cases, their extracurricular interests and talents are also important (and sometimes key) factors in the final admission decision and may also lead to scholarships. In this session, students learn about the ways that extracurricular activities and other factors might impact their decisions about colleges. The session ends with the “Great Sorting Game,” which helps students understand that their GPAs aren’t the only factors that colleges consider.

Objectives

By the end of this session, students will:

- understand how extracurricular activities can improve opportunities for college admission, enhance the college experience, and lead to future jobs
- begin a résumé
- examine a college bound calendar for high school
- understand how these pieces fit together through playing “The Great Sorting Game.”

Activities and Handouts

Recap Activity: Have students pair up and share the course plans that they created for next school year. Ask students to compare their plan (or their previous courses) to their partner’s plan.

Activity #1: Translating Interests into Activities

Handouts: Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 2; Interests and Related Activities

Activity #2: Building Your Résumé and Getting Involved

Handout: Activities Résumé

Activity #3: Understanding the Big Picture

Handout: College Planning Checklist

Activity #4: Putting It All Together

Handout: The Great Sorting Game

Wrap-Up

4

Session 4: Going to College Starts Now: Extracurricular Interests and Activities

Activity #1: Translating Interests into Activities

Students' extracurricular interests (in or out of school) can often be translated into more formal activities. This exercise helps students brainstorm clubs, organizations, teams, etc. they might want to join. In the following activity, they are encouraged to begin a résumé (or list) of the activities that they are currently involved in and to add to that list each time they begin a new activity.

Opening Discussion

Remind students that colleges want active and engaged students involved in their communities and that scholarship organizations also look for students involved in activities.

Do your extracurricular interests:

- enable you to discover your talents and develop your skills?
- help build confidence and teach you to value relationships and connections?
- lead to college majors and future employment as well as internships and volunteer opportunities?
- enhance your application to college and your chances for admission, as well as scholarships?

Activity/Handout

Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 2 Interests and Related Activities

Instructions

1. Begin by asking the students to complete the "Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 2" as fully as possible.
2. Once they have completed it, 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 interests might relate to school or community activities and to future majors and/or careers. They may need to do some brainstorming to think of majors and careers. Remind them that there are no wrong answers here and that they may have to think creatively in order to figure out how their interests would translate into something more.
3. Once students have had a chance to complete their charts, ask them to introduce their partner to the group, so that all can benefit from the observations and questions that may arise with this exercise.

Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 2

Student Name _____

1. What activities do you enjoy outside of the daily routine of school? Why?
2. In which sport, games, or activities do you participate? With whom?
3. Have you had any leadership roles on a sports team, in local organizations, religious institutions, youth groups, or school-sponsored activities?
4. In which school-sponsored extracurricular activities have you participated? Why?
5. What summer experiences have been particularly important to you? Camps, academic programs, jobs, etc.?
6. What kind of music do you like? Do you play an instrument? Do you sing? Would you like to? Do you have friends or family members involved in music?
7. Are there activities or opportunities of which you wish you had taken advantage earlier? Do you have any regrets? Is it too late now?
8. Have you been involved with any volunteer or service work? What did you learn from it? Will you continue in the future? Why did/do you do it?
9. What are your interests outside of school?
10. What is something that you're really good at that no one else knows about?

Interests And Related Activities

This table should help you to organize your interests and talents and decide how they might relate to activities you could pursue in or out of school and how they might lead to a major in college or a possible career.

List your talents and/or interests in the first column and discuss with your partner what activities you might be able to join that would fit those interests and put them in the second column.

Finally, discuss possible college majors or careers that you might be able to pursue that would fit those interests and talents.

Interests and Talents (i.e., writing)	Related Activities (in and out of school) (i.e., yearbook)	Possible Major and/or Career (i.e., journalism/newspaper reporter/digital content writer)

4

Session 4: Going to College Starts Now: Extracurricular Interests and Activities

Activity #2: Building Your Résumé and Getting Involved

Opening Discussion

A résumé is a list of your experience, skills, and educational background, and it's an important piece of the college application. It allows colleges to learn more about you outside of your classroom work and academic performance. Your résumé should be a "living document" that you add to throughout high school until it's time to apply to colleges in your senior year.

Activity/Handout

Activities Résumé

Resources List (optional)—the facilitator may want to create a list of extracurricular activities and volunteer opportunities in the school and community, as well as a list of local scholarship opportunities and resources, to share with the students.

Instructions

1. Ask students to fill out the "Activities Résumé."
2. Students should add any activities they join during high school to the list.
3. Students should be encouraged to keep a copy of the résumé in a safe place since it can be used not only for completing applications, but also as an informative piece to share with their school counselor and teachers who may write recommendations for them.
4. In addition to their "Activities Résumé," the facilitator should remind students to keep a record of awards or honors (and the dates they received them) in a file folder or electronic portfolio.

Activities Résumé

	Dates From/To	Time Spent		Responsibility / Accomplishments *Note any leadership positions
		Hours per week/month	Total Hours	
A. School and Athletic Activities				
B. Volunteer/ Community Service				
C. Paid Work (after school or summer job)				
D. Summer/ Enrichment Programs (Upward Bound, Gear Up, etc.)				

4

Session 4: Going to College Starts Now: Extracurricular Interests and Activities

Activity #3: Understanding the Big Picture

Opening Discussion

It is important for students to understand that each year in high school will count toward preparing for college. They should be aware of important events to be sure that they are taking advantage of every opportunity before applying to college the fall of their senior year.

Activity/Handout

College Planning Checklists—Grades 9–11

Instructions

1. Give each student a copy of the “College Planning Checklist” and ask them to read it carefully, putting check marks where appropriate.
2. After giving them time to thoroughly read the Checklist, allow time for questions.

College Planning Checklist

Freshman Year

- Plan a challenging program of classes to take.
 - The courses you take in high school show colleges what kind of goals you set for yourself. Are you signing up for advanced classes, honors sections, or accelerated sequences? Are you choosing electives that really stretch your mind and help you develop new abilities? Or are you doing just enough to get by? Colleges will be more impressed by respectable grades in challenging courses than by outstanding grades in easy ones.
 - Keep in mind the courses that colleges expect you to have completed for admission; your schedule should consist of at least four college preparatory classes per year, including:
 - four years of English
 - four years of math (through algebra II, trigonometry or higher)
 - two–four years of world language
 - three–four years of laboratory science
 - two–four years of history/social studies
 - one year of fine arts
 - one year of electives from a list provided by facilitator.

- Create a file of important documents and notes.
 - Copies of report cards and certificates, lists of awards and honors, and lists of school and community activities in which you are involved, including both paid and volunteer work with descriptions of your responsibilities.

- Get involved with academic enrichment programs, summer workshops, and camps with specialty focuses such as music, arts, and science.
 - Keep in mind that learning doesn't happen only in the classroom.

- Stay active in clubs, activities, and sports that you enjoy.
 - Colleges look at more than just your academic record for admission. It's important that you demonstrate your abilities outside of the classroom, too.

Sophomore Year

- Learn what resources are available to help you plan for college by meeting with your school's college or school counselor. Ask about catalogs, guidebooks, college search programs, and college websites.
- Begin your college search and visits.
 - Create a list of colleges and universities you are interested in and discuss it with your parents and school counselor.
 - Find out about the different types of schools. Decide which characteristics are most important to you, such as the size of the school, distance from home, cost, and extracurricular activities.
- Continue extracurricular activities, as admission officers look at students' extracurricular activities when considering them for admission.
- Continue participation in academic enrichment programs, summer workshops and camps with specialty focuses, such as music, arts, and science.
- Update your file of important documents and notes.
- Prepare for standardized testing.
 - Ask your counselor about taking the PreACT or PSAT/NMSQT test in the fall or the PSAT 10 in the spring (with or without writing). These are valuable tests to help you prepare for the actual ACT and SAT, two college entrance exams, which you can take during your junior year.
 - Review PreACT, the PSAT 10, or PSAT/NMSQT test results with your parents and school counselor.
 - Many students take SAT Subject Tests for college admission as early as sophomore year. These tests help you show colleges your proficiency in different subject areas.
- Sign up for junior year courses keeping in mind that you will want to challenge yourself with tougher courses. It will pay off in the long run, not only by making you smarter, but also by impressing colleges and helping you earn scholarships.
- Talk to your counselor about registering for AP courses next year. AP, or Advanced Placement, courses grant college credit for achievement in exams during high school covering different college-level subjects.

Junior Year

August

- Start your year off right by talking with your school counselor about the year ahead. Be sure to ask about test dates for the PSAT/NMSQT, ACT, and SAT. You'll need to register up to six weeks ahead of time.
- Start investigating sources for financial aid. Take note of scholarship deadlines and plan accordingly.
- Develop a résumé—a record of your accomplishments, activities, and work experiences. This will be an important part of your college application.
- If you don't participate in many activities outside of class, now is the time to sign up. Consider clubs at schools, team sports, or even an after school job.

September/October

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT. Even if you took the PSAT10 during your sophomore year, taking the PSAT/NMSQT this year will count towards National Merit Scholar consideration and will give you a better predictor for the SAT you take later this year or next.
- Sign up for ACT or SAT prep courses or use free test preparation resources online. If you can't find the best websites, ask your counselor. You will want to take the test at least once in the spring and again next fall during your senior year.

November

- Sign up for the ACT and SAT, if you haven't already.

December

- PSAT/NMSQT test results should be coming in. Review the results to learn more about your strengths and weaknesses and discuss them with your parents and counselor. Connect your College Board and Khan Academy accounts to get free, personalized practice for the SAT.
- Use your PSAT/NMSQT score report to access free personalized feedback, practice and college planning based on your PSAT/NMSQT results.

January/February

- Meet with your school counselor again to develop your senior schedule. Ask how you can improve your college preparation.
- Talk to a counselor or teacher about registering for AP courses during your senior year.
- Register for a spring offering of the SAT and/or ACT.
- Think about registering for SAT Subject Tests this spring. The final registration deadline for taking the test this academic year will be in May.

March/April

- Begin taking a more serious look at colleges and universities you are interested in attending. Gather information about academics, financial aid, and campus life. Go to college fairs and open houses and learn as much as you can from the internet about schools so you can make the best decision possible.
- Plan college visits. Your spring break can be a good time because you can observe a campus when classes are going on. Even if they aren't campuses that you think you would attend, it is important to get exposure to college campuses and the college experience.
- Think about lining up a summer job, internship, or co-op.
- If you are in AP courses, get ready for the AP exams next month.
- Develop a preliminary list of colleges that interest you. Contact them to request a viewbook and additional information.
- Take a look at some college applications and consider all of the different pieces of information you will need to compile.

May

- AP Examinations are given in high schools nationally this month. Make sure you are signed up and know the dates and times for your exams.
- Make a list of teachers, counselors, employers, and other adults who you might ask to write letters of recommendation for your college applications.

4

Session 4: Going to College Starts Now: Extracurricular Interests and Activities

Activity #4: Putting It All Together

Opening Discussion

The Great Sorting Game engages students in an enjoyable mock-admission simulation. The purpose is to help students understand the many factors weighted in admission decisions. The game should generate discussion that summarizes many of the issues presented so far.

Activity/Handout

The Great Sorting Game

Instructions:

1. Instructions and game materials are in the pages that follow.

The Great Sorting Game

Getting Started with Play:

Find nine volunteers to be admission candidates. Secure an additional volunteer to play the director of admission. The director reads the qualities and tells students whether to move up or down in the competition. Hand out the GPAs in random order and then instruct admission candidate volunteers to organize themselves in GPA order from highest to lowest. Don't let the audience see their cards. (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 group of non-volunteers is told that they are the Admission Committee from "College University" (or you pick a better and funnier name). The committee is at the very end of the admission cycle and still has nine great applicants, but can only admit three students. All have very appealing qualities, but there is simply not enough room in the class for all nine. Before them they see the candidates. Point out that they are in standing in GPA order from highest to lowest. Also emphasize that all are great candidates and so the committee will have to decide based upon personal qualities and qualifications. Point out that if the committee were to decide *only* on academics, the three with the highest GPAs would get in.

The Great Sorting Game is intended to be a lighthearted and instructional demonstration that gives participants insight into some of the factors considered in a holistic, selective admission process. For students to understand why these factors matter to institutions, there should be some discussion of each factor after each move led by the facilitator.

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. (*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 candidate. As an example: you may ask, "Why do you think it might not be helpful to declare your major as pre-med or psychology?" After reading the "Greek Major" quality, point out that many selective colleges' Classics Professors only want a few students in their classes. Stop after the Early Decision qualification to discuss how this may play into a decision by a college. In this way, it is more than reading the qualities. It is a way to generate discussion.

The Ending:

After all qualities have been read and candidates have been sorted, have the candidates turn their GPA sheets around to reveal the GPA to reveal to the audience. Read through the GPAs, pointing out the new order and note that the top three sorted candidates are going to be admitted.

You might choose to have a small prize to thank the volunteers.

The Great Sorting Game

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

1. **IF YOU HAVE TAKEN AN EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG ACADEMIC PROGRAM +2**
Review some of the academic choices that would be considered “exceptionally strong,” for example, 4-5 years of the same foreign language, multiple advanced, or AP classes. It may be important to note that colleges will first consider what is available at any given high school, to determine the context of what is rigorous in that setting.
2. **IF YOU PLAY THE OBOE OR VIOLA +1**
Highlight the fact that colleges and universities will have many special slots to fill in order to have a well-rounded student body. The most obvious example is on athletic teams, less obvious are hard to find musicians for the band and orchestra.
3. **IF YOU CLEARLY STATED THAT THIS COLLEGE WAS YOUR FIRST CHOICE BY MAKING AN EARLY DECISION APPLICATION AND COMMITMENT +2**
Here it is important to explain the early decision and early admission options that are available at some institutions. Explain the commitment required of an early decision applicant and how this may help colleges, for example, in predicting their enrollment or attracting top students.
4. **IF YOUR INTENDED MAJOR IS PSYCHOLOGY OR PREMED -1**
Both of these are very “popular” majors for freshman applicants, and while not necessarily a detriment to admission, don’t distinguish a student from others applying.
5. **IF YOUR INTENDED MAJOR IS GREEK +2**
In contrast to #4, many selective colleges have “dusty” classics or geology or actuarial science professors who are anxious to find enough students to fill their seats. (At this point you might want to remind students that all of these statements are generalities).
6. **IF YOU DON’T KNOW ANY OF YOUR TEACHERS WELL AND HAD TROUBLE FINDING SOMEONE TO WRITE YOUR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION -2**
Point out that throughout high school it is important to form positive relationships with teachers. When asking for a recommendation, provide information or reminders about your work in that teacher’s class and don’t be afraid to mention something you would like to have highlighted.
7. **IF, WHEN YOU TYPED YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY, YOU FORGOT TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE COLLEGE YOU WERE APPLYING TO, -4**
How you choose to make first impressions counts with colleges. In addition, more and more colleges are exploring how students choose to present themselves in social media.
8. **IF YOU ARE A LEGACY +2**
Point out that many institutions give special consideration to legacy status, for a variety of reasons, including the fact that loyal families often lead to financial support. Note that at some colleges only immediate family will count for legacy status. This is an example of why highly selective admission involves factors that are beyond many students’ control, and demonstrates why it is important to apply to a range of colleges in terms of selectivity.
9. **IF YOU DIDN’T WRITE THE OPTIONAL ESSAY FOR YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION -1**
Many colleges consider “demonstrated interest” in choosing students because, not only do they want enthusiastic students, but this leads to a better enrollment yield from accepted students. Visiting campus, attending local information sessions and corresponding directly with admission offices are other ways to show interest.
10. **IF THE TOPIC OF YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY WAS “WHAT I LEARNED FROM PLAYING SPORTS” -1**
Some college essay topics are so common that it is very difficult, although not impossible, to write a unique and interesting essay. The most obvious topic may not be the best and it is worth exploring what truly makes you unique in choosing your topic.
11. **IF YOU WROTE THE ESSAY OF THE YEAR—THE ONE THAT WAS PASSED AROUND THE ENTIRE ADMISSION OFFICE IT WAS SO REMARKABLE + 3**
This one is self-explanatory.
12. **IF YOU PLAGIARIZED AN AP AMERICAN HISTORY PAPER AND GOT CAUGHT—SIT DOWN, YOU’RE OUT OF THE COMPETITION ENTIRELY**
Use this to explain what is and what isn’t a serious disciplinary issue for colleges. Nearly every institution will understand minor infractions, especially in the less mature early years of high school. But academic dishonesty is a different issue and one that colleges know may be repeated.

13. **IF YOU WILL BE FIRST IN YOUR FAMILY TO ATTEND COLLEGE +2**
Almost all colleges and universities reward students who have overcome factors that make them less likely to pursue a college education. Another example is the English as a second language applicant.
14. **IF YOU PARTICIPATED IN AN ENRICHING SUMMER PROGRAM BETWEEN YOUR JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS +2**
Give here some examples of summer programs that are available to high school students—on college campuses, internships, special academic focus programs, or in-depth volunteering. All these endeavors help students stand out.
15. **IF YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN NO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES -3**
Remind students that most selective colleges are looking to build a well-balanced and interesting freshman class. If only academic performance was considered, you might say with a smile, no one would ever leave the library. (This may a good place to contrast some large state universities where GPA and test scores, alone, may be clear indicators of who will be admitted.) Suggest some new ways to get involved, for students who may feel they need to broaden their profile.
16. **IF YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN A SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT +1**
Colleges seek students who aren't self-absorbed and are willing to give time and energy to others. An emphasis on service is an important factor on many college campuses. Distinguish voluntary community service from "required for graduation" service.
17. **IF YOU ARE AN EAGLE SCOUT +2**
Explain that attaining the rank of Eagle Scout requires a long and consistent commitment to a goal, as well as strong demonstration of leadership skills. Help students identify some similar activities in which they might be involved.
18. **IF YOU ARE A VARSITY ATHLETE +2, AND IF YOU ARE A VARSITY ATHLETE AND TOOK SECOND-PLACE AT REGIONALS IN YOUR SPORT MOVE UP ONE MORE (A TOTAL OF 3)**
Fielding strong teams is important to visibility, recruitment, and alumni support—among other factors. Many colleges and universities recruit athletes—not just Division I schools, but also Division III institutions. Even at a college that doesn't offer athletic scholarships, athletic participation may provide that "value added." The ongoing commitment that leads to athletic excellence may be demonstrated in many other activities.
19. **IF YOU GOT A "D" IN AN ACADEMIC COURSE AT THE END OF YOUR JUNIOR YEAR -3**
Though no one grade makes or breaks an academic record, colleges will look at grade trends. Generally, colleges will look for increasing rigor over four years and either consistent strong academic performance, or an upward trend.
20. **IF YOU CAME TO THE COLLEGE INFORMATION SESSION AND INTRODUCED YOURSELF TO THE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE (AND IN THE CASE OF THE STUDENT WHO JUST GOT THE "D", EXPLAINED THE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES) +1**
This is another example of a way in which to "demonstrate interest." In addition, giving "context" to any special circumstances—whether in writing or in person—can make a big difference in how a record is viewed.
21. **IF YOU ARE A RESIDENT OF IDAHO +3**
Another light-hearted way to demonstrate the capriciousness of some decision factors. Almost every college is seeking all sorts of diversity, and given a small number of students applying from any given geographic location, being in that demographic may be an advantage. Use this moment as a time to discuss ethnic, gender, religious, and other diversity issues. (For example, a woman applicant may be advantaged in engineering and a male applicant in nursing.)
22. **IF YOU NEVER GAVE YOUR COUNSELOR ANY PERSONAL INFORMATION FOR USE IN WRITING YOUR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION -1**
Explain that most counselors have many students in their caseload and many recommendations to write each year. Offering information, either face-to-face or in writing, about activities, accomplishments, interests and family situation will help a counselor write an accurate and distinguishing letter.
23. **IF YOUR LAST NAME IS ON THE COLLEGE LIBRARY—AND IT'S NOT A COINCIDENCE—MOVE ALL THE WAY TO THE FRONT AND STAY THERE**
The purpose of this foil is to demonstrate in a humorous way to students that there are simply factors over which they have no control in the highly selective admission process and which are, likely not "fair." Point out that for this reason, if no other, it is important not to become overly emotionally invested in the outcome. Self-worth isn't measured by college admissions decisions. And the good news is that there are literally hundreds of wonderful colleges and universities at which any one student can achieve, grow and thrive. This is likely the MOST important message of this whole game!

4.0

- YOU DIDN'T WRITE THE OPTIONAL ESSAY FOR YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION
- YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN NO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
- YOU ARE A RESIDENT OF IDAHO

3.9

- YOUR INTENDED MAJOR IS PRE-MED
- YOU WROTE YOUR ESSAY ON “WHAT I LEARNED FROM PLAYING SPORTS”
- YOU PARTICIPATED IN AN ENRICHING SUMMER PROGRAM BETWEEN YOUR JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS

3.8

- YOU HAVE TAKEN AN EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG ACADEMIC PROGRAM
- YOUR INTENDED MAJOR IS PSYCHOLOGY
- WHEN YOU TYPED YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY, YOU FORGOT TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE COLLEGE TO WHICH YOU WERE APPLYING
- YOU PLAGIARIZED AN AP AMERICAN HISTORY PAPER AND GOT CAUGHT

3.7

- YOU PLAY THE VIOLA
- YOU DON'T KNOW ANY OF YOUR TEACHERS WELL AND HAD TROUBLE FINDING SOMEONE TO WRITE YOUR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION
- YOU DIDN'T WRITE THE OPTIONAL ESSAY FOR YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION
- YOU NEVER GAVE YOUR COUNSELOR ANY PERSONAL INFORMATION FOR USE IN WRITING YOUR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION

3.6

- YOU CLEARLY STATED THAT THIS COLLEGE WAS YOUR FIRST CHOICE BY MAKING AN EARLY DECISION APPLICATION AND COMMITMENT
- THE TOPIC OF YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY WAS “WHAT I LEARNED FROM PLAYING SPORTS”
- YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN A SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT OR TRIP
- YOU ATTENDED THE COLLEGE INFORMATION SESSION AT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AND INTRODUCED YOURSELF TO THE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE

3.5

- YOU PLAY THE OBOE
- YOU PLAN TO MAJOR IN GREEK
- YOU ARE A LEGACY
- YOU PARTICIPATED IN AN ENRICHING SUMMER PROGRAM BETWEEN YOUR JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS

3.4

- YOU ARE A VARSITY ATHLETE
 - YOU HAVE TAKEN AN EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG ACADEMIC PROGRAM
- YOU WILL BE THE FIRST IN YOUR FAMILY TO ATTEND COLLEGE
- YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN A SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

3.3

- YOU WROTE THE ESSAY OF THE YEAR—THE ONE THAT WAS PASSED AROUND THE ENTIRE ADMISSION OFFICE IT WAS SO REMARKABLE
- YOU ARE A VARSITY ATHLETE AND TOOK SECOND PLACE AT REGIONAL COMPETITION IN YOUR SPORT
- YOU GOT A “D” IN AN ACADEMIC COURSE AT THE END OF YOUR JUNIOR YEAR
- YOU ATTENDED THE COLLEGE INFORMATION SESSION AT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AND INTRODUCED YOURSELF TO THE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE (AND OFFERED AN EXPLANATION OF YOUR “D” GRADE)

3.2

- YOU ARE A LEGACY
- YOU ARE AN EAGLE SCOUT
- YOUR LAST NAME IS ON THE LIBRARY—AND IT'S NOT A COINCIDENCE

4

Session 4: Going to College Starts Now: Extracurricular Interests and Activities

Wrap-Up

Keep in Mind

Colleges aren't looking for any one type of student. However, all schools look for an accomplished student who brings a lot to the table. While colleges search for truly well-rounded students, they do take into account that grades might not be as high for a student who is committed to many activities outside of the classroom and vice versa. Students should continue to keep a record of all of the activities that they do outside of school and should also keep in mind how those activities have shaped who they are and will make them better candidates at their chosen colleges.

Homework

Students should write a two-paragraph essay on "The Ideal Student."

1. In the first paragraph, the students are to pretend that they are a college admission counselor reviewing student applications. They should write what they are looking for in the ideal student. Remind students that admission counselors don't just look for good grades but take many things into account.
2. In the second paragraph, students should write how they *are* or *can become* that ideal student. Here, students should focus on actions they have taken or will take in the future.
3. Remind students that each paragraph should be five or more sentences.

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Session 5: The College Search and Application Process

The purpose of this session is to build on the knowledge students have gained about themselves and colleges in the previous sessions. It also expands upon Session 2 about the various ways they can find out about colleges. As a result, students should begin to understand which colleges might be the best fit for them. The students will look at their résumés in relation to the kinds of information they are gathering about colleges and, by looking at The Common Application, The Universal Application, or the Coalition Application, will begin to determine how they will ultimately convey this information to colleges. This session will also discuss how special needs and talents factor into the application process.

Objectives

By the end of this session, students will:

- understand the importance of fitting their interests, abilities, and goals with the resources individual colleges can offer
- recognize several resources that will help with a college search, including the college visit
- review the application process
- understand how special needs and talents are viewed by colleges (this includes artistic, musical, and athletic talents, as well as the needs of students with learning disabilities).

Activities/Handouts

Recap Activity: Ask students to share the qualities they would look for in the “Ideal Student.” Allow five or fewer minutes for them to share and discuss.

Part 1: Continuing the college search

Activity #1: Beginning the Search

Handouts: Activities Résumé (from Session 4); College Counseling Questionnaire

Activity #2: Using College Viewbooks to Track Your Interest

Handouts: College Fit Tracking; College Viewbooks; Internet Sites Focused on College Exploration (from Session 2)

Activity #3: Campus Visits and College Fairs

Handouts: Campus Visits; College Fair Tip

Part 2: College Admission and the Application

Activity #4: Filling Out an Application

Handouts: Parts of a College Application

Wrap-Up

5

Session 5: The College Search and Application Process

Continuing the College Search (Part 1)

Activity #1: Beginning the Search

Opening Discussion

In Session II, “There is a College for Everyone” students learned that there are more than 4,000 colleges and universities and that there is more than one institution that can meet their needs. Building upon the questions discussed in “Charting Your Course for College,” students begin to personalize the search process, first by determining the questions to ask about what colleges can offer and second what they can convey to colleges through the application process.

Activities/Handouts

Activities Résumé (from Session 4)

College Counseling Questionnaire

Instructions

1. Remind students they are at the center of the search, so they need to make their own decisions and realize that their answers to the questions are different from other students’.
2. Hand out the “College Counseling Questionnaire” and ask them to complete it as honestly and fully as possible.
3. Then ask them to highlight the factors they think will be most important to them as they look for the right fit college.

College Counseling Questionnaire

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ GPA: _____

In the space below, respond to the following questions. Your responses are for your personal information and college counseling only. Respond openly and honestly.

Location

1. Do you have a specific location in mind for college (i.e., a specific city, state, or region)?
2. Do you have any requirements in terms of location (i.e., warm/cold climate, near family, near the ski slopes)?
3. How far from/close to home is the ideal college (i.e., minutes away, an hour away, a day's drive, a flight)?
4. Do you prefer a city, a suburb, or a small town?
5. Do you want your college to be near other colleges (in a college town)?
6. Do your parents have a certain location in mind?
7. Are you willing to consider locations you haven't yet visited or do you prefer a location with which you are comfortable?

Academic Interests

1. Do you have a specific career in mind? What college major do you think would best suit this profession?
2. What other academic areas do you hope to pursue in college?
3. Do you work better when you are challenged by tough classes and motivated classmates or when you are near the top of a less competitive group?
4. How hard do you work in high school?
5. How hard do you expect to work in college?
6. What types of academic programs would you like your ideal college to have (study abroad, internships, honors, etc.)?
7. Is it important that you attend a well-known college? Why?

Size and Student Body

1. Do you prefer a small college (2,000 students or fewer), a mid-sized college (2,000–8,000), or a large university (more than 8,000 students)? Why?
2. Are you comfortable in small classes? Large classes? Why?
3. Do you prefer a college that is primarily for undergraduates or a university that also has graduate students on campus?
4. Would you consider a single-sex college?
5. Do you prefer a college with a religious affiliation?
6. What kind of diversity do you hope to find at college?

Activities

1. Do you plan to participate in sports at college?

2. What other extracurricular activities interest you?

Finances

Will cost influence where you go to college? Will you apply for financial aid? Do you think that you will qualify for merit scholarships (based on achievement)? Do you plan on applying for external scholarships?

Admission Selectivity

If 5 is the most selective (level of difficulty on gaining admission) and 1 isn't at all selective, to which level of college do you expect to apply? Which do you think are most likely to offer you admission?

5

Session 5: The College Search and Application Process

Activity #2: Using College Viewbooks to Track Your Interest

Opening Discussion

Remind the students about using guidebooks, viewbooks, and the internet to gather information about colleges. Encourage them to begin taking notes on which colleges appeal to them and why.

Activity/Handout

College Fit Tracking

College viewbooks

Internet Sites Focused on College Exploration (from Session 2)

Instructions

1. Distribute the “College Fit Tracking” chart and review the descriptive categories.
2. If students know which colleges interest them, have them complete the chart using what they already know about those schools. If not, distribute college viewbooks—you may need to divide students into small groups depending on the number of viewbooks you have available—and have them fill in the chart with information they find in the viewbooks. Ask the students if any of these colleges fit their interests.
3. Encourage students to design their own charts, and reflect the factors most important to them.
4. Remind students to keep this chart and to use it in the future as they continue their college search. This chart is a good way for students and counselors to keep track of the colleges that the students have investigated.

College Fit Tracking

Place the name of the colleges that you are interested in at the top of each column. Add any factors that are important to you as you search for the best fit for you.

	College A	College B	College C
School Name			
Location			
How Competitive? (Expected GPAs/Test Scores)			
Majors Offered			
Extracurricular Activities			
Total Student Population (Undergraduate/Graduate)			
Size of Classes			
Tuition/Scholarship Programs			
Academic Support Programs			
Dorm Choices			
Social Life			
Other			

5

Session 5: The College Search and Application Process

Activity #3: Campus Visits and College Fairs

Opening Discussion

Students should know that colleges welcome prospective students to their campuses, and campus visits are a great way for students to get to know colleges. Students should also know that many colleges have cost-free visit programs. Colleges often identify potential applicants through school counselors. Students should talk with their school counselors about these programs and should also contact colleges directly to find out whether they have programs for prospective applicants.

Also, colleges visit communities across the country and participate in college fairs to share information with prospective students. It's not only important to attend these college fairs, but to be prepared to get the most out of the fairs.

Part 1: Preparing for the College Visit

Handout

Campus Visits

Part 2: Accessing Colleges Through School Fairs

Handout

College Fair Tips

Instructions

Part 1:

1. Distribute the "Campus Visits" handout.
2. Discuss briefly and answer questions from students.
3. Ask students to keep the handout in their folder for future reference.

Part 2:

1. Distribute the "College Fair Tips" sheet. Go over the handout with the students.
2. Access a list of college fairs in the area through the NACAC or the regional affiliate website.
3. Instruct students to prepare by developing a list of the college booths they want to visit prior to going to the fair. They should research the colleges and use their college tracking charts to help them decide which booths to visit and what questions to ask.
4. Encourage role-play. The counselor can first role-play being underprepared and unfocused, then a student can volunteer to role-play being properly prepared with a list of questions and engaging the admission representative.

Campus Visits

After you compile a list of colleges where you may apply, it's time for the campus visit. While it does take time and money, the campus visit is invaluable in information gathering. It allows you and your family to gauge college fit.

The visit can give you a true sense of day-to-day life on campus:

- The school may be diverse, but is there a genuine integration of the student body?
- The school may be large, but is it supportive?
- Teachers can be highly qualified, but are they enthusiastic about teaching?

Understanding a college requires looking beneath the facts and figures.

Pre-Planning

Call to schedule the visit at least two weeks ahead of time.

Not pre-planning can lead to an unproductive visit. If you call ahead of time, the admission office will be able to accommodate you and ensure you have a great visit.

Make sure to get proper directions to the admission office.

To make a good first impression, make sure you know where you're going so that you can arrive on time. Get a campus map and, if you have any questions, call the admission office to clarify your directions.

If there is anything specific you wish to see, ask ahead of time.

Depending upon the time of year, admission offices may not be able to accommodate you. For example, in the summer months, staying overnight or seeing a professor is usually not possible. However, it doesn't hurt to ask if there might be something of specific interest to you, like visiting a class.

Be flexible.

Be willing to try something else, and always remember that you want to present yourself positively—you might want to apply to this school later.

If you need to cancel or reschedule, call ASAP.

Of course, you cannot predict emergencies or unforeseen circumstances, but it is a common courtesy to contact the admission office to let them know that you can't visit.

During the Visit

Take notes.

Write a few things down during the visit. Your notes will be a valuable reference tool when comparing colleges later.

- What image do you get of student life? Talking to current students is a good way to find out what life might be like for you on campus. What activities are students participating in on campus? Do students appear happy with their experience?
- What are the admission criteria? Admission criteria vary by college. It is important to find out what you need to do to be eligible for a specific school. Ask what courses and tests need to be taken before you apply.
- What events and speakers are planned? Events and campus guests are another lens through which to evaluate and judge the soul of the college. Are they engaging?

Ask questions.

Take an active role. This is a golden opportunity for you to ask questions about what really matters to you.

- Are answers to your questions consistent? You can determine a lot about whether a college has a certain culture if you receive consistent answers to your questions whether you are asking them of students, admission personnel, teaching faculty, or administrators. What do people care about? How do students and faculty treat and regard one another?
- Are people asking you questions? When you meet people during your visit, you can find out a lot by the questions they ask you. Are they asking you questions that lead you to believe they are interested in you and the contributions you will make?

Try to explore things on your own.

Eat in the cafeteria, talk to students, see where they hang out and look around the neighborhood of the school so you can get a complete picture.

- What is posted on campus bulletin boards? Posters, messages, and announcements about upcoming events all give you an impression about the soul of the college. They inform you what people care about. What are the issues? Who is recruiting for volunteers? Who is speaking out about what?
- What are students doing or talking about when they aren't in class? As you walk across the campus, get near students speaking to one another. What are they talking about? A campus issue? What just happened in class? Or, about that afternoon's sporting event? When you are eating with students in the dining hall, what are their topics of conversation?

Don't discount the school because of bad weather or other uncontrollable circumstances.

Some students cross a school off their list simply because it rained, or because they visited during a school break when activities are minimal. Don't fall into this trap.

Post Visit

Always write a thank-you note or email the admission contact.

To make a great impression, write a thank-you note to those you met on campus. This gives you the opportunity to be remembered when your application is reviewed.

Make sure you have contact information for any future questions or concerns.

Keep business cards and pamphlets in some organized folder so that you can refer back to them if necessary.

Make sure to remain in contact with the school.

Some schools keep a record of contact information, and in some cases, use that as a measurement of your interest level as the school is considering you for admission. This process is known as demonstrated interest.

Talk with your high school counselor about the visit.

Parents, relatives, and friends can help you evaluate your impressions after college visits, but your counselor can provide a neutral and informative perspective about your experiences.

College Fair Tips

Before the Fair:

- Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Do I want to attend an extra-large, large, medium, or small school?
 - What major(s) am I interested in?
 - Do I want to attend an urban, suburban, or rural school?
 - Do I want to attend a two-year, four-year, single-sex, or religiously affiliated school?
 - Do I want to participate in athletics, clubs, fraternities or sororities, or special programs, such as study abroad or cooperative education?
- Research colleges that are attending the fair to determine if they meet your search criteria.
- Make a list of questions to ask college representatives. Try to select questions that are insightful and aren't easily answered in the literature.
- Bring a résumé and/or card with your name, address, high school, year of graduation, email address, intended major, and activities to give to the representative.

At the Fair:

- Pick up a fair directory and bag for the materials you collect.
- Visit schools that fit or are the closest match to your search criteria.
- Ask the same questions you have developed to each college representative you visit.
- Make sure to fill out an inquiry card to let the college know you were in attendance (or give them a pre-printed card you brought with you). This will enable you to get on their mailing list.
- Make notes about information which you found most interesting/helpful.
- Be adventurous. Don't just talk to the "well known" schools.
- Attend an information session that is offered to gather information about the college search process, financial aid, or whatever topics are available.

After the Fair:

- Review information (catalogs and viewbooks) to gather more information and help narrow down your choices.
- Send a thank you note/email to the college representative as a way to reinforce your interest in the school.

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Session 5: The College Search and Application Process

College Admission and the Application (Part 2)

Activity #4: Filling Out an Application

Opening Discussion

Begin a discussion on the application process with an interactive question and answer session. Here are some questions and themes to consider:

- How difficult do you think it is to be admitted to college?
- Did you know that some colleges practice “Open Admission,” while others are considered to be highly selective? Some colleges only consider SAT/ACT scores and GPA, while most will look at many other factors before making a decision. (Remember the “Great Sorting Game?”)
- Referring back to the viewbooks and other colleges that have been discussed, see if you can determine schools that are “selective” in their admission policies.
- How do you think those colleges would view you as an applicant, considering your résumé and curriculum plan (courses taken, GPA, activities)? Let the students know that typically students will apply to several colleges and will try to include at least one “realistic” college that they and their school counselor think they could get into. (Many models encourage students to apply for a “safety,” a “match,” and a “reach” school.)
- Are you thinking about playing a sport in college? Playing a musical instrument? Majoring in painting or theatre? If so, you should know the following:

For the athlete:

- Talk to your coaches early and often.
- Don't be lured into college athletic search companies.
- Be open to all options: Division I, Division II, Division III; NAIA; Club and Intramural Teams.
- Keep your grades up because college are looking for student-athletes, not just athletes.
- Visit the NCAA website (www.ncaa.org) to learn about eligibility and recruiting rules for all sports. Another reliable website is www.athleticaid.com.

For the artists, dancers, musicians, and actors:

- Discuss your plans with your teachers/instructors.
- Keep your work: portfolios for artists (you may need to submit as part of an application), lists of parts in performances for actors and, when possible, recordings of your music for musicians.
- Auditions for dancers, musicians, and actors are often part of the admission process for those planning to continue to study their art (depending on the type of program offered).

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Session 5: The College Search and Application Process

Continued Activity #4: Filling Out an Application

Activity/Handout

Parts of a College Application

Sample Application (Facilitator should find and print.)

Instructions

1. Give each student a copy of “Parts of a College Application.”
2. Walk the students through the parts of the application using the handout and sample application. There won't be time for them to complete the entire application at this time, but respond to any questions they have so they can complete it when they get home. Emphasize that it is valuable to draft applications before they submit a final one. Here are the sections to focus on:
 - **Activities section:** Point out that when they completed the “Activities Résumé” in Session 4; the students compiled most of the information they will need for this section. What they will need to do is put that information in the format required by each individual application (often they are asked to list activities in order of importance). Give them time to begin doing that.
 - **Secondary School Report Form:** Explain that this is the type of form that someone at their high school, probably their counselor, will complete. For colleges that request it, it accompanies the transcript. Ask students what surprises them about this form. Ask them about their relationship with their counselor.
 - **Midyear Report Form:** Explain that this is sent after the fall semester of senior year. Explain to students that changes in their senior year curriculum have to be reported to colleges. *Senior year matters!*
 - **Teacher Evaluation/Recommendation Form:** Ask students what surprises them about this form. Stress that the purpose of the teacher recommendation is to write about them as a student in that teacher's classroom. Ask students to identify at least two teachers who they could ask to write a recommendation and ask them to jot down several adjectives they think those teachers would use when describing them. Stress that if they can't think of any teachers now, they should try to build a relationship with a teacher before senior year.
3. Conclude the session with a reminder that by beginning the college search early and by knowing the components of an application, the students are much better prepared to apply to college when the time comes in their senior year. Encourage them to keep all of the materials/handouts in a folder or binder.

Parts of a College Application

Important Things to Remember:

- You, the student, are responsible for sending your actual application and some additional documentation. Your high school is responsible for sending the transcript and a secondary school report (if required). If a teacher agrees to write a letter of recommendation, that teacher is responsible for submitting it. But *you*, the student, are responsible for following your school's policy for requesting transcripts and letters of recommendations. Know what you are expected to do!
- Listed below is everything that *could* be required, but you might not be asked to submit everything on this list to every college. *For example, there are many colleges that don't require students to write essays. There also are many colleges that don't require standardized test scores.*

What Is Included in a College Application

Official Transcript: Your transcript is the record of all the courses you have taken for high school credit, your grades, and credits earned. This is the information you should have on the curriculum planner you completed in Session 3. Other information that might be included on a transcript: GPA, class rank, standardized test scores, courses in progress. This is normally sent directly from your high school to the college.

Standardized Test Scores: The majority of colleges require one of the two admission tests: the SAT or the ACT. Other tests could be SAT Subject Tests, Advanced Placement Exams, and the TOEFL. Many colleges and universities give applicants the option of reporting scores from either of the two major testing programs. Students should weigh the advantages of taking both or either test. Retakes may be needed in the senior year, because students don't always receive their highest score from their first testing. Bulletins describing the programs and practice tests should be available in high school counseling. For students who meet low-income standards, test fee waivers are available.

The Application Form: The student is responsible for locating the application, completing it, and submitting it by the college deadline (by mail or online). Many colleges accept standardized college applications, such as the Coalition Application, The Common Application, or the Universal Application. No matter what school or what application, these are important components:

- Personal and Educational Data (i.e., name, address, phone number, email, citizenship; residency information, high schools you have attended, college credits you have earned, parental information, senior year schedule, and standardized test scores)
- Honors and Awards
- Extracurricular, Personal, and Volunteer Activities
- Employment, Internships, and Summer Activities (some colleges allow you to submit a résumé in addition to the activity section of their application)
- Essays, short answer and/or a longer personal essay
- Disciplinary information
- Application Fee (many colleges will accept fee waivers which can be obtained from the counseling office)
- Signature
- For certain majors, students may be required to audition or asked to submit a portfolio of artistic work.

Secondary School Report Form or Counselor Recommendation Form: This isn't required by all colleges, but, if it is required, the high school is responsible for submitting this form to the college. However, you will need to request that it be sent. It is important to know and follow your school's procedures.

Tip: Usually the person at your school (probably your counselor) completing this form asks for information from students and parents ahead of time. If possible, meet with this person before he or she writes a letter of recommendation.

Midyear Report Form: This form isn't required by all colleges but, if it is required, it will be submitted by your high school. However, you must request that it be sent. The purpose of the form is for the college to see your grades from the first term of your senior year.

Teacher Evaluation/Recommendation Form: Not required by all colleges, but the teacher or college counselor is responsible for sending this form. However, you are responsible for asking a teacher to complete it and giving that teacher all the necessary information. Look over this form and imagine what one of your teachers would say about you. Colleges aren't only looking for teachers from courses where you have received an A, but from teachers who know you well and can talk about your work ethic, inquisitive nature, and motivation to learn.

5

Session 5: The College Search and Application Process

Wrap-Up

Keep in Mind

The college search and application process can be very complicated and stressful if students don't *take the time* to manage the process carefully. Students should first take into account their interests before choosing a school because not just any school can meet all of the students' needs. Campus visits and college fairs are great ways to gain information that can help students determine if a school is the right fit academically, financially, and socially. Once determining a list of schools, remind students that they should carefully fill out applications, making sure to consult the handouts and assignments that they have done thus far to facilitate the completion of their applications.

Homework

1. Instruct students that if they haven't already done so, it is now time to sit down and talk with their parents about their college options.
2. Not only can students share all they have learned through the program, but they can ask their parents for their thoughts on college possibilities.
3. Students should also encourage their parents to attend the awards ceremony at the end of final session of the program.

6

Session 6: Building Your Dream Team and Taking It on the Road

The purpose of this session is to help students build momentum for their college planning that will carry them through to the actual point of selecting colleges completing applications. Students will be encouraged to think about the resources upon which they may draw over their high school years, including the adults in their lives.

Objectives

By the end of this session, students:

- identified individuals who can serve as mentors in college planning
- explored summer experiences that will enrich college readiness
- enhanced problem-solving skills to be used as they pursue college admission
- received a certificate of completion
- completed an evaluation

Activities/Handouts

(Activities #1 and #2 require interactive white or dry erase boards, or a flipchart)

Activity #1: Finding Friends and Mentors on the Path to College

Handouts: With a Little Help From My Friends (first two questions); Getting Help from Your School Counselor

Activity #2: Using Your Time Beyond the Classroom to Prepare for College

Handouts: With a Little Help From My Friends (third question); Summer Programs

Activity #3: Developing College-Readiness Problem-Solving Skills

Handout: My Map to College: Nothing Can Stop Me Now!

Activity #4: Wrapping It All Up

Handouts: Evaluation Tool; Certificate of Completion

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Session 6: Building Your Dream Team and Taking It on the Road

Activity #1: Finding Friends and Mentors on Your Path to College

Opening Discussion

Each one of us requires friends and mentors as we work toward our future goals. It is important that students identify the individuals who can help them reach their goal of college matriculation. Students should consider who may help or impede their planning for college.

Activity/Handout

With a Little Help From My Friends

Getting Help from Your School Counselor

Instructions

1. Distribute the handout, "With a Little Help from My Friends." Allow approximately five minutes for students to answer the first two questions.
2. Ask students to share with the group the individual they have identified as a mentor and what role that person has played in the students' lives.
3. Discussion: Have students report on the individuals whom they have identified as potential friends and mentors during their college planning process. Use the chalkboard or flipchart to list individuals by the roles played in the students' lives. By the end of this activity, students should have touched upon these individuals: parents, siblings, school counselors, teachers, coaches, leaders of extracurricular activities, community and religious leaders, and employers.
4. Distribute the handout, "Getting Help from Your School Counselor." Give students a few minutes to review the handout.
5. Ask students to share what their experience with school counselors has been to date.
6. Discuss with students the special resources that school counselors may provide. Suggest ways to overcome problems that may have arisen in effective working relationships to date.

With a Little Help From My Friends

A mentor is defined as: “a wise and trusted teacher or guide.” Your road to college will be much easier if you enlist the help of one or more mentors along the way.

1. Name a person who will have a positive influence on your ability to go to college:

(Note: this person is one of your “mentors”)

- What is this individual's relationship to you?

- How has he or she helped you move ahead toward college?

2. Who else can you think of who could be a mentor and help you attain your college goals?

3. Identify an experience you had outside of the classroom (during the last year) that makes it more likely that you will have a successful college experience.

- How did this help you prepare for college?

Getting Help from Your School Counselor

School counselors are one of the best ongoing sources of support for students who plan to go to college. They can be your friend throughout the entire college process. If you are lucky enough to have access to a counselor in your school, it is in your best interest to visit that person on a regular basis.

Start by making an appointment to meet with your counselor. Begin your meeting by introducing yourself and stating clearly that it is your definite goal to attend college. Make sure your counselor realizes that this is *important* to you and that you are *highly motivated!* Make sure this happens by junior year or earlier: Now is the time to start helping your counselor get to know you and your college dreams.

Throughout your high school years, 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 your academic record and suggest areas that need improvement.
- Begin the admission process by identifying the questions you should be asking—and finding honest answers.
- Find information; for example in books, catalogues, brochures, and websites that deal either with the admission process or a specific college or university.
- Locate websites that offer *reliable* and *free* information about college.
- Identify special opportunities that may maximize your chances for being a well-prepared and appealing candidate for colleges. These might include weekend or summer programs on college campuses (often free for first-generation students), internships, or community college classes open to high school students.
- Learn 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 the required college admission tests, including your eligibility for testing fee waivers. Provide a fee waiver if you cannot pay for tests yourself.
- Figure out how to PAY for college. Your counselor can give you essential information about the “need-based” financial aid application process and can provide lists of scholarships available to students in grades nine–12.

If you feel it will be helpful, ask your counselor to meet with you and the members of your family who will be working with you in your college planning. Having everyone in agreement about your future will make the process much easier!

Be your own advocate in the college admission process:

- Start thinking about your “story” for your application essay/personal statement.
- Identify some extracurricular activities offered at school or volunteer opportunities in the community that will help you strengthen your college application.

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Session 6: Building Your Dream Team and Taking It on the Road

Activity #2: Using Your Time Beyond the Classroom to Prepare for College

Opening Discussion

Students should understand that experiences beyond the classroom can help them prepare for college admission and success. Colleges care about how students elect to use their unscheduled time. In particular, summer is an important time that can be used to enhance maturity, motivation, and academic readiness.

Activity/Handout

With a Little Help From My Friends (third question) Summer Programs

Instructions

1. Instruct students to answer question #3 on “With a Little Help From My Friends” handout. Ask each student to share the experience that has enhanced their likelihood of a successful college experience and how this has helped them to prepare for college. Use the chalkboard or flipchart to list these activities.
2. Ask students to group these activities by kind, for example:
 - extracurricular activity
 - sports
 - church
 - employment
 - academic enrichment.
3. Distribute the handout on Summer Programs. Explain that, in addition to what has already been listed, a summer program may be an exceptionally good experience in terms of college preparation. Point students to the websites they may use to explore summer programs. If computers are available, devote some time to exploring the sites.)

Summer Programs:

You mean what I do in the summer can help me with college options?

What comes to mind when you think of summer? Summer job? Fun in the sun? Travel? How about college preparation? Did you know that colleges will take note of *how* you have used your summers as an indication of your educational preparation?

Working at a summer job can certainly help you save money for college and provide adult mentors, but think about investing some time at a summer program on a college campus. Many are free or low-cost, with scholarship opportunities. The right choice can help you learn what it's like to be in college, where your career interests can lead you, and how to connect with more people who can help you in the college process.

Finding the Right Summer Program for You

Find a program that fits your academic area of interest or just narrow down the list of things that seem of interest.

- Many colleges and universities host summer programs for high school students. Finding a program on a college campus will expose you to the college experience and help orient you for college life.
- Ask your local college or university about the programs they offer. Or, if you know what college you might want to attend after high school, look there.
- Many programs are associated with some type of cost, so be mindful of that. If cost is a concern, ask the program if they have financial aid or fee waivers. And also be aware that there are free summer programs.
- Registration deadlines are extremely important. Some programs accept every student who applies, and some are very selective. The best way to ensure your selection is to apply early. Make sure all necessary documentation is in your application so that it can be processed and so that you can be considered for the program of your choice.

While these programs are important for your development and your future, remember that this is still your summer vacation. In other words, communicate with your family as to the best times for you to participate in these programs.

In the end, you should pick the summer enrichment program that is the best fit for you academically and socially. Choose something in which you have a serious interest, and ask as many questions as you can about the program you choose so that you know exactly what to expect.

Visit www.collegechoice.net/rankings/best-pre-college-summer-programs/ to find a great variety of pre-college summer programs, from camps to internships.

Sample summer opportunities from college/career exploration to specific academic preparation, to finding out what it's like to be a college student while still in high school:

www.leadprogram.org—a partnership of top business schools and corporations that provides summer programs for high school juniors

www.blackexcel.org/summer-progs.htm—a comprehensive list of options for minority students

<http://jackierobinson.org>—provides educational and leadership development programs, as well as scholarships, mentors, and internships

www.abetterchance.org—a resource for identifying, recruiting, and developing leaders among young people in underserved populations

www.jbhe.com—*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* evaluates many programs and campuses seeking diversity

<https://apps.carleton.edu/summer/clae>—a week long, all expenses paid program for rising juniors to introduce them to college life and the value of a liberal arts education. Applicants must apply during their sophomore year.

www.ncssm.edu/summer-programs—free summer programs for students interested in science and mathematics

www.spelman.edu/academics/summer-programs—a five-week non-residential program for students interested in the sciences

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Session 6: Building Your Dream Team and Taking It on the Road

Activity #3:

Developing College-Readiness Problem-Solving Skills

Opening Discussion

Students need to begin thinking ahead to how they will continue planning for college beyond the end of this session. The purpose of this activity is to help students consider challenges that may arise as they continue on their path to college. The exercise calls upon topics covered throughout the six-session series. By problem-solving and sharing with one another, students should grow in their determination to reach their goal—college!

Activity/Handout

My Map to College: Nothing Can Stop Me Now!

Instructions

1. Distribute the handout: My Map to College: Nothing Can Stop Me Now!
2. Divide students into small groups of three. Instruct them to follow the directions on the first page of the handout.
3. When groups are finished, bring the whole group back together. Move from small group to small group asking for their response to each challenge-point: Was it a “bump in the road” or a “roadblock?” How did they think the challenge might be addressed? Who might help?
4. Allow other groups to respond before moving on to the next challenge.
5. Invite the whole group to summarize what they learned from this exercise.

My Map To College: Nothing Can Stop Me Now

Congratulations, you've made the decision to go to college. Good for you! Now you are in the driver's seat and here is a map to get you started on your way. You are going to find that there are some bumps in the road and even a few roadblocks. To reach your final destination—college—you will need to figure out how to get over the bumps and around the roadblocks.

Work with your small group to come up with solutions to the challenges you will encounter on the map on the next page. First decide if this is a “bump in the road” (fairly easy to get over), or a “roadblock” (will require time and work). Next, discuss possible solutions. Jot down who you might go to for help in making progress and/or how you solved the problem. Be ready to share with the whole group at the end.

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Session 6: Building Your Dream Team and Taking It on the Road

Activity #4: Wrapping It All Up

Opening Discussion

This is an opportunity for you to congratulate all students on their commitment to attend college and their participation in the sessions. You will want to motivate students to continue beyond these sessions.

Activity/Handout

Evaluation Tool

Certificate of Completion

Instructions

1. In your own way, thank and congratulate students on their participation and completion of the series of sessions.
2. Ask students for informal oral feedback on their experience.
3. Distribute "Evaluation Tool" and collect when completed.
4. Distribute "Certificates of Completion."

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Resources for Early High School: Parent/Guardian Workshop

Objectives:

- Present information about the various kinds of postsecondary education.
- Help parents understand the educational routes to postsecondary education.
- Discuss the importance of interests, values and abilities in educational decision-making.
- Discuss the importance of building a sound record of achievement in challenging high school courses.

Handouts:

- Thinking About Plans After High School
- Academic Preparation for College
- Types of Financial Aid
- Accessing Individual Characteristics

Message

Parents are a child's first and most influential teacher. In fact, parents are often surprised by the impact their roles as educators have on the lives of their children. The more parents or guardians understand about the challenges of learning, the better equipped they will be to play a guiding role in charting a school experience for their child that ensures high school graduation and presents the widest range of educational and career options.

How can parents help? They can begin by taking an active interest in what their child is studying in school. The courses a student takes at every grade level have a lot to do with what the child can do after high school graduation. Throughout grades 7–12, families can assist by doing the following:

- investigating the types of programs offered in the school
- monitoring the student's grades or other reports of academic progress
- meeting regularly with counselors and teachers to monitor progress
- becoming familiar with the school calendar, especially grading periods, and special events (e.g., testing periods)
- encouraging the student to get involved in school and community activities
- reviewing the child's course schedule and participating in future course selection
- teaching self-advocacy, self-discipline, and motivation, which allows students to act on their own behalf.

Introductions

You will need to use some type of icebreaker technique to introduce yourself, your fellow presenters, and the participants to each other.

Discussion Questions

Some of the questions and discussion topics you may wish to interject are listed below:

- Ask parents what options they had after school. Will their children have the same opportunities? Will they face the same obstacles?
- Ask parents what postsecondary education options exist in the community, and what has been their experience at these schools. What have they heard about these options?
- Ask what local resources they have found to help guide their children's educational experience.

Activities

A number of activities could enhance the information you provide to parents.

- When discussing the various kinds of postsecondary education, consider inviting a representative of each to participate in the workshop:
 - colleges and universities
 - community and junior colleges
 - trade and technical schools.
- Invite a high school counselor to talk with parents about the specific educational programs (e.g., academic, vocational, or technical) and the courses available to students.
- Identify the specific educators and community agency representatives who can assist during the middle and high school grades. Invite these individuals to the *Step by Step* workshop to talk about their programs.
- List the admission requirements for state universities. Compare them with requirements at a private institution in your area.

Plans After High School

Some students move directly from school to a job. These students may have pursued a vocational or technical education while in high school. Without formal vocational preparation, they will likely be required to participate in some form of apprenticeship or on-the-job training program to gain entry to their chosen occupation. Other students may decide to take time off before continuing their education so that they might save money for college or explore their interests.

Students may choose to enter military service. The Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Coast Guard provide several hundred occupational opportunities, as well as the specific training programs required to be successful in each. The military services also provide the opportunity to participate in college and university training and to continue these studies following enlistment.

Future Plans

List the goals your student wants to achieve at the following postsecondary options.

Postsecondary Options	Goal	Postsecondary Options	Goal
Service Opportunity		Community/Junior College	
College or University		Gap-Year Programs	
Military Service		Trade or Technical School	
Work			

Types of Postsecondary Institutions

College and University

Institutions composed of divisions called schools or colleges that offer a wide range of majors and prepare individuals for a wide spectrum of careers. There are about 2,500 four-year accredited colleges and universities in the US.

Trade and Technical School

Privately owned schools specializing in trades or vocations. There are thousands of schools in the United States offering hundreds of different courses and occupational programs. These schools specialize in teaching particular skills (e.g., welding, culinary arts, cosmetology, and telecommunications) required in the workplace. Visit the Vocational Schools Database at www.rwm.org.

Community College/Junior College

Two-year public and private institutions conveniently located in local communities. They specialize in college transfer programs, vocational programs, or both. There are about 1,200 community colleges in the US. Visit the Community College Finder at www.aacc.nche.edu/pages/ccfinder.aspx.

Online Institutions

These are for students who may be unable to attend classes on campus. Traditional colleges and universities also offer some courses and programs online. To learn about online institutions, visit www.onlineschools.org.

Academic Preparation for College

Required/Recommended Precollege Coursework

Subject Area	Amount of Study	Types of Classes
English	4 years	Literature, Writing/ (Language Arts) Composition, Speech
Science	3–4 years	Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Earth/Space Science
Mathematics	3–4 years	Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II, Trigonometry and/or Pre-Calculus, Calculus
Social Studies	3–4 years	US History, US Government, Economics, World History/Geography
World Language	2–4 years	Must be of same language
Arts	1–3 years	Art, Dance, Drama, Music, Performing or, Visual Arts
Computer Science	basic knowledge	

How Counselors Help:

- Monitor achievement and progress in the classroom.
- Identify individual learning concerns and find solutions.
- Appraise aptitude, intelligence, and other individual characteristics; interpret findings.
- Provide information about high school study options and course offerings and assist in educational planning.
- Teach study skills and motivate students to get the most out of their school experience.
- Encourage students to maintain an academic portfolio.
- Foster extracurricular involvement and the maintenance of an extracurricular record.
- Introduce the concepts of educational exploration and decision-making, and aid students in understanding the various educational options they may pursue.
- Give students support and guidance through the development of post-high school plans.

High School Classes

Facilitator should hand out list of courses offered and high school. Students fill in boxes with specific classes.

Subject	Ninth Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
English				
Science				
Mathematics				
Social Studies				
Foreign Language				
Arts				
Computer Science				
Elective				
Elective				
Elective				

Types of Financial Aid

Grants

Grants are also known as gift aid; they are based on need and don't have to be repaid. Grants are provided by federal and state governments, or a college. Grants are based on a student's financial need, and when the need is high, the grant aid tends to be high as well. Grants may be made up from various sources. There are five types of federal student aid grants, all of which require filing the FAFSA to be eligible:

- Federal Pell Grants are the largest source of free money for college from the federal government. To be considered, the student must file the FAFSA. Pell Grants can be used for tuition, fees and living expenses. They pay up to \$5,815 (2017) per year.
- Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (FSEOG) are awarded to students with exceptional financial need. Filing the FAFSA is all that is needed, and students who qualify for a Pell Grant will be given priority consideration. The grants pay up to \$4,000 per year (2017). The FSEOG program is administered directly by the financial aid office and each participating school, so it's called "campus-based" aid. Not all schools participate.
- Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grants are for students pursuing a degree in education. The award amounts up to \$4,000 per year and the student agrees to teach in a participating school or teach in a high-need field for four complete years. This grant is converted to a direct unsubsidized loan and must be repaid if the teaching agreement isn't fulfilled.
- In addition to federal grant money, many institutions have their own grant aid available for high-need students.
- Almost every state education agency has at least one grant or scholarship available to state residents. Visit https://www.nafsa.org/state_financial_aid_programs for more information.

Scholarships

Scholarships are a form of financial aid that is usually based on merit, sometimes in combination with need. The competition for many scholarships is intense. Some are given to the student who exhibits a particular ability or skill such as athletics or music; others are awarded for academic achievement. Scholarships are often renewable for each college year, usually contingent on the student continuing to participate in the activity that prompted the award; or, in the case of academic scholarships, maintaining a certain achievement level or grade point average. In some instances, the college controls the scholarship process, inviting only certain students to become candidates.

Websites, such as Fastweb (www.fastweb.com) and The College Board (<http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>) provide free scholarship search services that allow students to identify scholarships based on their interests, talents, need, ethnicity, and other factors. However, students should be aware of scholarship scams. One way to spot a scam company is if it asks students to pay a fee in order to provide a scholarship search or guarantees a successful search. Visit www.finaid.org/scholarships/scams.phtml for more information on scholarship scams.

Don't overlook the possibility of local scholarships. Students should seek out and apply for as many local scholarships as possible. High schools, churches, local businesses, civic organizations, and special programs may have local scholarships. Some companies and businesses offer assistance to children of their employees. The school counselor or the school's website can provide information about local scholarships as well.

Work-Study

In this case, the student earns the money awarded, often working part-time on campus. (Examples are front desk assistant, biology tutor, and research assistant.) Students may be able to find employment related to college studies or community service. The typical number of hours worked is 10–15 hours per week, and the salary is often higher than minimum wage.

Loans

Loans are a part of most financial aid packages, and they must be repaid, usually with interest. Fortunately, most government loans don't have to be paid until after graduation. Loans can be either need-based or awarded without regard to the family's financial circumstances, and they may be awarded to the student or to the parent(s). Loans based on need usually come from the federal government, the college or university, or private lenders.

Some of the most common types of the loans include:

1. Stafford Loan – the most common government loan for undergraduates at all types of colleges. The government pays the interest on a Stafford subsidized loan while the student is in college.
2. Direct Unsubsidized Loan – a federal student loan available to undergraduate and graduate students. There is no requirement to demonstrate financial need. Students are responsible for paying interest.
3. Perkins Loan – a low interest loan for students with exceptional need. These loans are awarded by colleges using mostly federal funds, and no interest is accrued while a student is enrolled at least half-time. Not all schools participate. Repayment begins nine months after graduation. Students can borrow up to \$5,500 per year or a total of \$27,500.
4. PLUS (Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students) Loan – a federal loan that allows parents to borrow up to the total cost of attendance, less any other aid the student receives. These loans are unsubsidized, so the parent is responsible for paying the interest.
5. Private Loans – only after exhausting all other sources of financial aid. Private loans usually carry a higher interest rate than federal loans, and they may not have as favorable repayment terms.

Students and parents should get all of the facts about the loan before signing a loan agreement. Loans must be repaid according to the terms of the loan, even if the student doesn't finish college or is dissatisfied with the educational program.

Preparing to Meet College Costs

The earlier parents or guardians become aware of the costs associated with college, the better the family can incorporate educational costs into their savings plan. Families that begin to set aside an amount of money when the child is born are buying a form of insurance that the funds will be available to assist the student when the time comes to go to college. (www.irs.gov/uac/529-plans-questions-and-answers)

A simple savings account at a bank or credit union is a common choice, but there are other options:

- 529 plans are tax-advantaged investment plans offered by states or educational institutions. They are designed to encourage saving for the future college-going expenses of a designated beneficiary, typically a child or grandchild. Withdrawals from 529 plans are free from federal income taxes. Many states also offer a state tax deduction, matching grants, scholarship opportunities, and other benefits. Contributions to a 529 plan aren't deductible. There are two types of 529 plans: prepaid tuition and savings. Prepaid tuition plans allow the pre-purchase of tuition based on today's rates but paid out when the beneficiary is in college. Savings plans, administered by 49 states and the District of Columbia, require a monthly deposit that is invested, usually in mutual funds, on behalf of the saver. More information is available at www.collegesavings.org.
- Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) are matched savings accounts that help low-income families save and build assets that can be used to invest in a college education, among other things. The match on the family's monthly investment, which can be quite small, is provided by a variety of government and private-sector sources. IDAs also include a financial literacy component that helps families plan for the future. More information is available at www.cfed.org/programs/idas.
- Coverdell Education Savings Accounts (formerly Education IRAs) are investment plans that allow deposits of up to \$2,000 in taxable income per beneficiary per year in a designated investment trust account. Later withdrawals for qualified expenses are tax-free. More information is available at <http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc310.html>.
- US Savings Bonds are very safe investments that offer relatively modest returns. Interest on savings bonds is always exempt from federal and state income taxes. When the bonds are redeemed in a year that eligible education expenses are incurred, the accrued interest is also free from federal income taxes (but only if the bond is registered in the parent's, not the student's, name). More information is available at www.treasurydirect.gov.

A resource to help set and meet college savings goals is the financial calculator at www.finaid.org/calculators. Another resource is <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/paying-your-share/college-savings-calculator>.

Assessing Individual Characteristics

A full examination of a student's individual characteristics will provide considerable insight that can help parents and educators assist students with educational planning.

- What natural abilities do they possess? What things come easy to him/her?
- In what school subjects has he/she obtained the best grades? In what activities and sports has he/she experienced the greatest measures of success?
- How does he/she enjoy spending their leisure time? What inspires his/her curiosity?

While considering the abilities and success of the student, equally important is the consideration of a child's weaknesses. Be aware of areas in which the child might need encouragement or help, while remembering that weaknesses can be the shadow-side of a child's strength.

Teachers and Counselors Can Help

When parents consider all that is involved in motivating, assisting and guiding their child, the task of helping them to succeed in school may seem overwhelming. It appears even more difficult with two, three, or more children moving through the elementary and middle grades at the same time.

Don't hesitate to ask for help from school and community organizations to ensure that the student gets the best education possible. First, build strong relationships with the teachers. They will be important allies throughout the schooling process.

A second key consultant to parents is the school counselor. The counselor's specific task, whether in elementary, middle, or high school, is to help students find success in school and to address the personal, social, emotional, and academic concerns that may stand between them and that success. Counselors have been specifically trained to assist in the many transitions that occur during the K–12 experience and beyond.

How Counselors Help:

- Monitor achievement and progress in the classroom.
- Identify individual learning concerns and find solutions.
- Appraise aptitude, intelligence, and other individual characteristics; interpret findings.
- Provide information about high school study options and course offerings and assist in educational planning.
- Teach organizational, study, and test-taking skills.
- Encourage students to maintain an academic portfolio.
- Foster extracurricular involvement and the maintenance of an extracurricular record.
- Introduce the concepts of educational exploration and decision-making, and aid students in understanding the various educational options they may pursue.