

Parents' College Planning Guide

Use this checklist to help your student prepare for educational opportunities after high school.

In 7th or 8th Grade

- Monitor your student's progress in reading, writing and math. Identify and discuss any learning problems with your student's teacher.
- Help your student set realistic goals. Recognize your student's efforts as well as successes.
- Talk with your student's school counselor about assessment tests to help your student identify personality traits, interests and skills as well as explore career options.
- Talk with a school counselor and your student about classes that lay the groundwork for college.
- Encourage your student to take challenging courses.
- Encourage your student to be an active learner by taking notes, participating in discussions, asking questions and learning from mistakes.
- Establish a quiet space for studying and a regular daily schedule for homework. Buy a dictionary and thesaurus.
- Help your student develop problem-solving skills by asking for his or her input, assigning responsibilities and allowing him or her to make certain decisions.
- Consider summer enrichment classes and programs for your student.
- Continue saving and encourage your student to put aside some of his or her earnings.

In 9th or 10th Grade

- Make sure your student is enrolled in challenging classes that are appropriate for your student's abilities.
- Help your student to evaluate his or her abilities and make the connection between education and career options.
- Talk with your student's school counselor about assessment tests to help your student identify personality traits, interests and skills as well as explore career options.
- Suggest a tutor or other special help if your student is struggling with a certain subject.
- Help your student to learn how to manage time and to use library and Internet resources.
- Talk with your student about his or her academic plan and learn about different types of postsecondary schools.
- Check if your high school requires its students to take the PLAN test in 10th grade.
- Suggest extracurricular activities to help your student develop teamwork, leadership and commitment skills.
- Continue saving and encourage your student to put aside some of his or her earnings.
- Consider summer enrichment classes and programs for your student.

In 11th or 12th Grade

- Talk with your student's school counselor about assessment tests to help your student identify personality traits, interests and skills as well as explore career options.
- Help your student explore programs that can earn your student college credit, such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Postsecondary Enrollment Options and College in the Schools.
- Check with your high school to learn whether it offers career-focused programs such as tech-prep, school-to-career and school-to-work.
- Make sure your student takes the PSAT no later than the fall of 11th grade.
- Check if your student has registered for the college entrance exam (ACT or SAT) required by the schools your student would like to attend.
- Search and apply for private scholarships as early as possible to help pay for college, but be wary of possible scams.
- Talk with your student about his or her academic plan to make sure your student takes the courses required for graduation and for admission to college. Talk about different types of colleges.
- Consider summer enrichment classes and programs for your student.
- Attend job fairs with your student. Explore career, apprenticeship or internship options.
- Attend college and financial aid fairs.
- Help your student narrow his or her choice of schools. Arrange for campus visits to those schools and help your student evaluate them.
- Download or request *Paying for College: State & Federal Financial Aid Guide* at www.getreadyforcollege.org (click on "Publications").
- Find a mentor or enrichment program to build on your student's interests and aptitudes.
- Encourage your student to mentor other students or volunteer in the community.
- Make sure your student asks for letters of recommendation (if required) from teachers, counselors and others who can comment on his or her ability to succeed in college.
- Make sure admissions applications are sent on time to at least four schools. If you cannot afford the application fee, check if the school has the option to waive it.
- Apply for financial aid by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid at www.fafsa.gov as soon as possible after January 1 of your student's senior year. You and your student will need the previous year's income tax information to complete it.
- Make sure your student's high school transcript has been sent to the schools to which your student applied.
- Review your Student Aid Report (SAR) for accuracy. If you make corrections, return the form as soon as possible.
- Help your student choose a college. Make sure your student notifies in writing the schools he or she doesn't plan to attend.