

Steps to College Middle School

Parents, did you know that numerous studies identify you as the single most important factor in your child's decision to go on to college? Regardless of whether or not you attended college, your consistent and unwavering reinforcement of the importance of graduating from high school and earning a high quality degree (i.e. license, certificate, associate's or bachelor's) is the greatest factor in a child's decision-making process. You can help with college access and success in the following ways:

Parents

To Do:

-  Question and listen to your child about his or her interests and plans for the future.
-  Initiate discussions with your child about potential career paths based on his or her interests and skills and help match those with possible careers.
-  Help your child develop good study habits, such as studying at the same time and place every day and having the necessary materials to complete homework assignments.
-  Stay in contact with your child's teachers and counselors so that they can let you know about any changes in your child's behavior or schoolwork.
-  Keep an eye on your child's grades, tests and report cards and help him or her find help if necessary. Encourage him or her to take challenging or higher-level courses if possible.
-  Help your child understand why an education beyond high school is personally and economically important.
-  Continue saving for your child's college education and encourage him or her to contribute to the savings, too. Consider opening a college savings account and read about the benefits at www.collegesavings.org.

Explore Together:

-  Child-friendly career and personality tests at <http://www.careercruising.com> or www.mydreamexplorer.org (check with your school counselor for a username and password).
-  "Helping Your Child" at www.ed.gov/parents.
 - *Helping Your Child with Homework* offers suggestions on assisting your child with successfully completing assignments.
 - *Helping Your Child through Early Adolescence* addresses issues that parents of 10- to 14-year-olds generally find most challenging.
-  "My Future, My Way: How to Go, How to Pay" at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov.

Have Fun:

-  Take your child to a college event and then talk about aspects of the college that might appeal to him or her, tying your child's interests and hobbies to specific locations on campus, such as the student life center, football stadium, arts center, academic departments, etc.
-  Go on a scavenger hunt (real or virtual) of a school of your child's choosing and locate places or items, such as the field house, fitness center, dorm, student life center, admissions office, academic departments, etc. Talk about each location and its importance to campus life.

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-  Discuss:
- What do you want to be when you grow up? What do you think you will have to study after high school to do those jobs?
 - What do you think of when you hear the words “college” or “post-secondary education”?
 - What do you think college is for? Why do students continue on to an education beyond high school?
 - Who do you know who goes to or has gone to college or a post-secondary institution? Where did they go?
 - What colleges or post-secondary institutions do you know about? How do you know about them? Where or from who have you heard about them?
 - What other things can you do in college or other post-secondary institution besides study and take classes?
 - Why do you want to go on to college or other post-secondary institution?

Student To-Do List

To Do:

-  Think about college as an important part of your future.
-  Discuss your thoughts and ideas about college with your family and people at school.
-  Work with your school Counselor to begin creating and completing your Educational Development Plan (EDP).
-  Think about putting a couple dollars a month into a savings account for college.
-  Take challenging and interesting classes to prepare you for high school. Engage in summer learning opportunity and begin to research available pre-college and career experiences.
-  Ask your parent or guardian to help you research which high schools or special programs will most benefit you and develop your interests.
-  Develop strong study habits.
-  Do your best in school and on standardized tests.
-  Don't give up if you're having trouble; get help from a teacher, tutor or mentor.
-  Become involved in school- or community-based activities that let you explore your interests and learn new things.
-  Speak with adults, such as your teacher, school counselor or librarian, relatives or family friends, who have interesting jobs. Ask them what they like about their jobs and what education they needed for their jobs.

To Explore:

-  Books about your role models. Identify how he or she accomplished his or her goals, what career path he or she took and what you might have in common with him or her.
-  www.careercruising.com or www.MyDreamExplorer.org - Share the website with your parents and tell them your favorite parts of it. Show them how to use it.
-  Virtual college tours at www.campustours.com.