

Steps to College

High School - 9th Grade

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:

Parent To-Do List

To Do:

-  Set and maintain high expectations and standards, academically and personally.
-  Create a place and time for your child to develop good study habits.
-  Help your child choose a class schedule that will prepare him or her for post-secondary education. Encourage your child to pursue pre-college and career experiences such as Career Tech Center (CTC), Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) Dual Enrollment (DE) and/or Early College courses.
-  Encourage your child to participate in school- or community -based extracurricular activities, internships or work experiences. Keep track of awards, honors, paid or volunteer work, summer workshops and academic enrichment programs.
-  Find people to support your child, such as school counselors, mentors, coaches, family members, etc.
-  Help your child navigate "best fit" post-secondary options.
-  Help your child start the college application process, from organizing necessary documents to developing a strong essay for scholarships and admissions.
-  Explore the reality that a post-secondary education is not only financially possible, but also financially feasible. Educate yourself about the many aid opportunities available.

With Your Child:

-  Discuss the importance of lifelong learning and the value of a post-secondary education.
-  Discuss the importance of adequate test preparation.
-  Discuss the impact high-school grades, classes and activities have on college admissions.
-  Compare your child's educational development plan (EDP) with college entrance requirements.
-  Encourage self-reliant decision making to promote critical thinking, responsibility and accountability for final decisions.
-  Explore financial aid options, including savings plans, for post-secondary expenses.

Explore Together:

-  "Saving Early = Saving Smart!" at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov. This handout explains why it's never too early to save money for college and how to use such resources as college savings plans and federal student aid.
-  The "College Match Maker" process at www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search.
-  A campus tour. Schedule a visit to a college or university that is nearby or that your child wishes to attend and use a campus visit checklist to help guide the visit.
-  A virtual campus tour at www.campustours.com.

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Student To-Do List

To Do:

-  Make school a priority.
-  Get good grades and practice good study habits.
-  Get to know your school counselor. He or she will be a valuable resource for scheduling, college access, career exploration and financing your post-secondary goals.
-  Talk to your parents about your future goals.
-  Review and update your EDP regularly.
-  Study for college entrance exams.
-  Participate in extracurricular activities. Such activities look good to colleges, especially when you can balance them with your schoolwork and social life.
-  Volunteer. It also looks good to colleges.
-  Visit campuses if possible.
-  Stay active and engaged during the summer. Read some good books, go to camps or workshops that are of interest to you, volunteer. Pursue available pre-college and career experiences.
-  Believe in yourself. Success begins with the belief that you have the ability to achieve your goals.

To Explore:

-  “College is Possible” at www.collegepossible.org.
-  The “College Match Maker” process at www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search.
-  A virtual campus tour at www.campustours.com.
-  ACT preparation at www.ACTstudent.org.
-  SAT preparation at <https://sat.collegeboard.org/home>