

# Parents' College Planning Guide

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

## In 7th or 8th Grade

- Monitor your child's progress in reading, writing and math. Identify and discuss any learning problems with your child's teacher.
- Help your child set realistic goals. Recognize your child's efforts as well as successes.
- Talk with your child's guidance counselor about having your child take an interest and skills assessment to help him or her begin thinking about career.
- Talk with a school counselor and your child about classes that lay the groundwork for higher education.
- Encourage your child to take challenging courses.
- Encourage your child 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 child 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 child.
- Continue saving and encourage your child to put aside some of his or her earnings.

## In 9th or 10th Grade

- Make sure your child is enrolled in challenging core subjects that are appropriate for your child's abilities.
- Encourage your child to evaluate his or her abilities. Help make the connection between education and career options.
- Talk with your child's guidance counselor about assessment tests to help your child identify personality traits, interests and skills.
- Suggest a tutor or other special help if your child is struggling with a certain subject.
- Help your child to learn how to manage time and to use library and Internet resources.
- Talk with your child about his or her academic plan and learn about different types of post-secondary schools.
- Talk with your child's guidance counselor about having your child take an interest and skills assessment to help him or her begin thinking about career.
- Make sure your child has taken the PLAN no later than the fall of tenth grade.
- Suggest extracurricular activities to help your child develop teamwork, leadership and commitment skills.
- Continue saving and encourage your child to put aside some of his or her earnings.
- Consider summer enrichment classes and programs for your child.

## In 11th or 12th Grade

- Talk with your child's guidance counselor about having your child take an interest and skills assessment to help him or her begin thinking about career.
- Help your child explore programs like Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Post-Secondary Enrollment Options and College in the Schools as well as career-focused programs such as tech-prep, school-to-career, and school-to-work.
- Make sure your child takes the PSAT no later than the fall of eleventh grade.
- Check if your child has registered for the college entrance exam (ACT or SAT) required by the schools your child would like to attend.
- Talk with your child about his or her academic plan to make sure your child takes the courses required for graduation and by post-secondary schools. Talk about different types of colleges.
- Consider summer enrichment classes and programs for your child.
- Attend job fairs with your child. Explore career, apprenticeship or internship options.
- Attend college and financial aid fairs.
- Help your child narrow his or her choice of schools. Arrange for campus visits to those schools and help your child evaluate them.
- Request a copy of *Focus on Financial Aid*, available by calling (651) 642-0567 or toll-free (800) 657-3866.
- Find a mentor or enrichment program to build on your child's interests and aptitudes.
- Encourage your child to mentor other students or volunteer in the community.
- Make sure your child 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 four to six schools. If you cannot afford the application fee, check if the school has the option to waive it.
- Make sure your child's high school transcript has been sent to the schools to which your child applied.
- Search and apply for private scholarships to help pay for college, but be wary of possible scams.
- Request financial aid forms from the schools to which your child plans to apply. Fill out the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) as early as possible after January 1 of your child's senior year. You and your child must complete your taxes before submitting the FAFSA.
- Review your Student Aid Report (SAR) for accuracy. If you make corrections, return the form as soon as possible.
- Help your child choose a school. Make sure your child notifies in writing the schools he or she doesn't plan to attend.