

This publication is presented as a guide for parents to ensure their children will be college ready after graduating from high school.

The Benefits of a College Education

- Most employers require at least a college degree for employment, even for an entry-level position.
- People with a college degree can earn 60% more in annual income than those with only a high school diploma.¹ College graduates will earn an estimated \$1 million more over their lifetime than those without a degree.²
- College graduates have access to better jobs and better pay, which can help improve the quality of life of the entire family.

¹ Sandy Baum and Jennifer Ma, *Education Pays, The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society* (Washington, DC: The College Board, 2007). ² Patte Barth, "A New Core Curriculum for All," *Thinking K-16* vol. 7, iss. 1 (Winter 2003): 3–19.

Support Your Child's Decision to Go to College

- Understand that your child will have a better future by attending college.
- Make the decision to do everything in your power to ensure that your child is prepared for college.
- Talk to and learn from other parents who have already sent their children to college.
- Begin discussing college with your child at infancy to create a foundation on which he or she will build on for the next 12+ years.
- Understand that your child's priority needs to be preparing for college, which at times will compete with other family responsibilities.
- Encourage your child to participate in positive activities outside of school, such as sports teams and volunteer projects in the community.
- Allow your child the flexibility to attend school-related functions that will increase interest in college, such as field trips to college campuses.
- Consider the possibility that your child may move away from home to go to the best college possible.
 - Encourage your child to visit college websites to learn about schools' requirements and programs offered.
 - Encourage your child to visit the College Board and ACT websites to learn about college-entrance exams. (These sites also have information for parents.)
 - Accompany your child on visits to college campuses.

- Ask your child about his or her career interests and the schooling required to be successful in that field.
- Find out about local summer college programs that your child can participate.

Be Engaged in Your Child's School

- Set up a meeting with the school counselor and your child's teachers to discuss your college expectations for your child and find out how school administrators can support you.
- Let your child's teachers know that you want to meet with them whenever there is a problem.
- Ask your child's teachers for suggestions on what you can do at home to support your child's learning.
- Encourage the school to hold college information sessions for parents and students.

Questions Parents Should Ask at Conferences with Teachers

1. How and when will my student be assessed to find out whether she/he:
 - Has learning gaps that will affect her/his success in the class?
 - Has already mastered some of the skills to be taught in the class?
 - Has the skills necessary to be successful in the next grade or subject?
2. Is my child at, above, or below grade level in reading? In math? In writing?
3. How will you (the teacher) communicate with me concerning:
 - Academic adjustments that will be made due to underachievement my student may experience?
 - Academic adjustments that will be made due to my student's high level of achievement?
 - Ways we can work together to help my student?
4. What is the best time to contact you during school hours?
5. Does my child have any signs of a learning disability?
 - If so, should this be tested to determine whether my child needs additional support?
6. How much time should be spent on homework each day? How can I help my child at home?
7. What school programs would benefit my child (e.g., gifted and talented or enrichment programs, after-school programs, music, homework club)?³

³ National Council of La Raza, *Parents as Partners* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2008).

Understand the Academic Requirements for University Preparation

- Understand the value of grades.
- Know your child's grade point average (GPA).
- Enroll your child in advanced placement or honors courses, if available.
- Ask a counselor about college entrance exams, such as the PSAT, SAT, and ACT, and their importance.
- Familiarize yourself with requirements for college/university admission, some of which can be:
 - Four years of English/Language Arts
 - Four years of Mathematics (beginning with Algebra I)
 - Four years of Laboratory Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, etc.)
 - Four years of Social Science (U.S. History, U.S. Government, Economics, World History, Geography, etc.)
 - Two years of each of the following: Foreign Language, Health and Physical Education, and Computer Technology
 - One year of Fine/Practical Arts
 - One to two years of required electives
 - GPA of 3.0 or higher
 - Passing the state high school exit exam
- Document participation in extracurricular activities (community service, sports, clubs, etc.).
- Know what courses your child is required to take in order to apply for college.

Your child's counselor usually has the big picture of your child's high school career and can bring all the information together for you. If the counselor is not accessible, don't feel discouraged; instead ask your child's teacher, the school's parent liaison, or principal for direction.

Questions Parents Should Ask a School Counselor

1. What resources are available through the school for my child to explore college and career options?
2. Which college admission and placement tests should my child take?
3. If my child falls behind in class, are tutors available through the school?
4. How do I calculate a GPA?
5. How do my child and I determine which college will be the best fit for him or her?
6. What do I need to know about financial aid and scholarships for my child?

Make Your Home a Good Place to Study

- Create a space, even if small, where your child can study without being disrupted.
- Keep a lot of reading materials around the house, such as newspapers, magazines, and books. You can even start your own home library!
- Create a "family hour" every day when you talk about school and going to college, work together on homework, or read together.
- Encourage reading by bringing home reading materials that will be of interest to your child.
- Display a calendar that shows the dates of tests, reports, and projects.
- Limit the amount of time your child spends watching television, using the computer, or playing video games.

Know Where the Money Is

- Talk to your child's high school counselor to get a good idea of how much it will cost for your child to go to college.
- Create a budget with your child that shows all the costs and all the possible sources of financial support.
- Ask the counselor to give you information about deadlines for financial aid and scholarships.
- Learn how to fill out the financial aid forms.
- Research organizations and companies that may offer scholarships.
- Consider the possibility of your child applying for a student loan.

- Visit www.fastweb.com for a list of scholarships available in all fields and disciplines.
- Caution your child about credit card use while in college.

Help Your Child Apply to College

- Ensure that your child applies early so he/she will have time to review and compare scholarships and financial aid offers, as well as see if any schools require him/her to take summer preparatory courses.
- Read the application instructions carefully (be sure your child provides all of the required information and materials, such as copies of high school transcripts or letters of reference).
- Your child should respond to all requests for additional information immediately and keep records of his/her responses.
- Your child should keep a file with a copy of his/her application and other materials, copies of letters from the colleges or universities, and copies of his/her letters to the schools.⁴

⁴ College for Texans, "Okay, You've Done Your Shopping. Now Start Applying," Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, <http://www.collegefortexas.com/apps/applycollege.cfm> (accessed November 24, 2009).

Am I a College-Ready Parent?

- ☒ My child's college education is a priority.
- ☒ My home offers a quiet, comfortable place for my child to study.
- ☒ My child is taking the right courses.
- ☒ My child's teachers and counselor know me.
- ☒ I know the process to apply for financial aid and scholarships.
- ☒ If I have questions about the college admissions process, I know whom to ask.



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The Road to College

A Parent's Guide to Ensuring Children are College Ready

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