

Planning for Education after High School

Parents should play an active role in assisting their children prepare for education after high school. You can help your children plan for the future by talking with them about their interests and abilities. Encourage them to take appropriate courses in high school, put forth their best efforts in every class and participate in extracurricular activities.

Planning for advanced education should be a process that begins long before your son or daughter graduates from high school. The following suggestions are a basic guide to use in this process.

In 9th and 10th Grades

- Help your son or daughter investigate career possibilities and compare their interests and abilities with specific career requirements. Determine education or training needed. Encourage them to ask their school counselors for reference materials that explain different occupations.
- If your child is not sure about career goals, the school counselor can help evaluate interests and aptitudes for various occupations. It is not necessary to settle on a specific career, but it is helpful to identify a general area of interest.
- Work with your child to make a list of schools they would like to attend and find out about entrance requirements. Which schools have the best programs for your child's desired field of study? What tests, extracurricular activities, courses and grades do the schools look for when they accept students? Compare expenses and campus settings at each school.
- Plan a sequence of high school courses that will best prepare for the college or other post-secondary institution of choice.
- Request information about scholarship and financial aid opportunities from the schools of interest.

In 11th Grade

- Contact school admissions offices for application packets, information on scholarship opportunities and other financial aid programs. Talk to your school counselor about advanced placement courses for college credit. Ask if the colleges and universities under consideration accept advanced placement credits.
- Find out which tests each school requires for admission or placement after admission.
- Help your son or daughter register to take the preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), the American College Test (ACT) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) about five weeks before the tests are scheduled. Test dates and site locations will be available at the high school.
- Find out if your son or daughter is eligible to receive any scholarships. Students who score high enough on the ACT or SAT, for example, may qualify for various scholarships.

In 12th Grade

- Encourage registration in September to take the ACT or SAT if your son or daughter has not already taken these tests. If improvement in a particular score is desired, students may take the test again later during their senior year.
- Contact your high school counselor in October for materials to help you and your child estimate your eligibility for financial aid. Attend special meetings at school to get more college and financial aid information.
- If there are plans to participate in a school's early-decision program, be sure your son or daughter obtains the necessary applications in October. Early-decision programs guarantee acceptance of qualified students prior to the spring of their senior year.
- Encourage your senior to pick up financial aid forms from the high school counselor in December.
- By December, be sure your son or daughter obtains application packets and other specific information from the schools being considered.
- Check with financial aid offices about scholarship programs unique to each school. Encourage your child to ask his/her school counselor about scholarships sponsored by organizations and individuals in your community.
- Work with your child to submit completed financial aid forms as soon as possible after January 1.
- Be sure to meet all application deadlines and supply all required information.

Last-Minute Decision

If the decision to continue education after graduation is made late in your child's last year of high school, it may be difficult to obtain financial aid and enroll in the school of choice. However, ask your school counselor for assistance in preparing late applications and do not give up. Encourage your child to complete the necessary forms and enroll as soon as possible.

What about the Military?

If consideration is being given to enlisting in the armed forces after high school, your child should start gathering information and talking to recruiters during the 11th grade. It is important to plan high school studies carefully. The type of educational opportunities and assignments you receive in the military may depend on the classes taken and grades earned in high school. The military also offers a variety of programs that can help you earn money to pay for college.

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