



Quest **For Your Student's SUCCESS**

The **Texas OnCourse** Family
Guide to Your Student's Future

TEXAS ONCOURSE

Why a **Family Guide?**

It's a practical guide for parents and guardians of middle school students to consult before their students start high school. The information here will not only prepare parents and guardians for the high school years but will help you guide students' postsecondary career choices.

It aligns with classroom lessons in the **Texas OnCourse Curriculum Guide**, which is provided to educators. It features talking points for parents and guardians as they navigate the transitions from middle school to high school and beyond.

This guide has four sections:

UNIT 1: Career and College Readiness

UNIT 2: Exploring Career Pathways

UNIT 3: Understanding Endorsements

UNIT 4: The High School Personal Graduation Plan

Each section discusses aspects of the academic, social, career, and personal tasks that students face. The four units do not have to be used in sequence.

At the end of each section is a series of activities called **Connect with Your Student's Counselor**. Use them as conversation starters with your student's counselor.

There is also a section at the end of each unit called *Student Success Tip* with activities that encourage parents and guardians to be active in their student's future. Helpful websites are also provided.



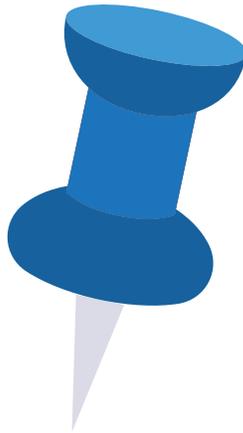
Contact **Texas OnCourse**
<https://tinyurl.com/ya32f23c>



UNIT 1

Career and College Readiness

There Are No Small Dreams



What Does It Mean to be Ready for **College and Career**?

This is not an idle question. Students, and parents, and guardians hear “college readiness” and “career readiness” frequently. We should grasp a working knowledge of some terms before we go any further.

College Ready: A college-ready student has the academic knowledge to enroll in an entry-level college course without the need for developmental coursework.

Developmental Classes: Students are required to pass developmental classes prior to entry-level college courses if they need to bring their skills in reading, math, or English up to college level, as determined by the Texas Success Initiative Assessment.

Career Ready: A career-ready student has or is aware of the knowledge and technical skills needed for employment in their desired field.

While not every high school student plans to attend college, most of the fastest-growing (and best-paying) careers require at least the knowledge and skills expected of first-year college students. For careers with promotion possibilities and better pay, all students need to reach this level.

Some programs of study (in some schools) even let students earn professional certificates while they’re still in high school.

Career-ready students can begin work in their desired field, and college-ready students can begin college with entry-level (not developmental) courses. Of course, students today can be both career and college ready depending upon their program of study.

The cost of not being college or career ready is huge. Making sure your student is learning math, English, social studies, science, and all the skills associated with those subjects (grammar, spelling, computation, scientific principles, etc.) saves you and your student both time and money.

Developmental classes can bring students up to college level, but families of students who are not college or career ready pay a price. A recent report found that one in four college students have to enroll in developmental classes their first year of college.

Each unprepared freshman pays an average of \$3,000 more than a college-ready freshman, borrowing nearly \$1,000 more for developmental coursework.

[Education Reform Now - “RELEASE: Americans Spending At Least \\$1.5 Billion in College Remediation Courses; Middle Class Pays the Most”](https://edreformnow.org/release-americans-spending-at-least-1-5-billion-in-college-remediation-courses-middle-class-pays-the-most/)

(<https://edreformnow.org/release-americans-spending-at-least-1-5-billion-in-college-remediation-courses-middle-class-pays-the-most/>)

Today’s students need more than subject-area knowledge or a knack for scoring well on academic tests. Soft skills are also necessary for success in college and career settings. Some examples include the ability to:

- Creatively solve problems
- Work well with a team
- Have strong communication skills

[DC.gov - “What Does College and Career Readiness Mean?”](https://osse.dc.gov/service/what-does-college-and-career-readiness-mean/)
(<https://osse.dc.gov/service/what-does-college-and-career-readiness-mean/>)

Keep this in mind as we navigate the path toward college and career destinations.

Middle School Counts!

The *Forgotten Middle*, a research study done in 2008 by ACT (they administer the ACT college entrance exam and the Aspire career readiness tests for third through eighth grades), concludes that middle school performance can have great impact on college and career readiness.

This means that success in middle school, along with a successful transition from middle school to high school, is just as important as the transition from high school to careers and college.

Students with good academic achievement before high school have unlimited opportunities.

Three areas to check:

Review your answers to these three questions. What do you need to work on with your student? Helpful links are provided after each question.

1. Has your student failed any core classes (math, English, social studies, science)? Failing core classes in middle school can be an early indicator that your student may need additional academic support (e.g., school-based or one-on-one tutoring). Depending on what your student finds difficult, the following articles might help.

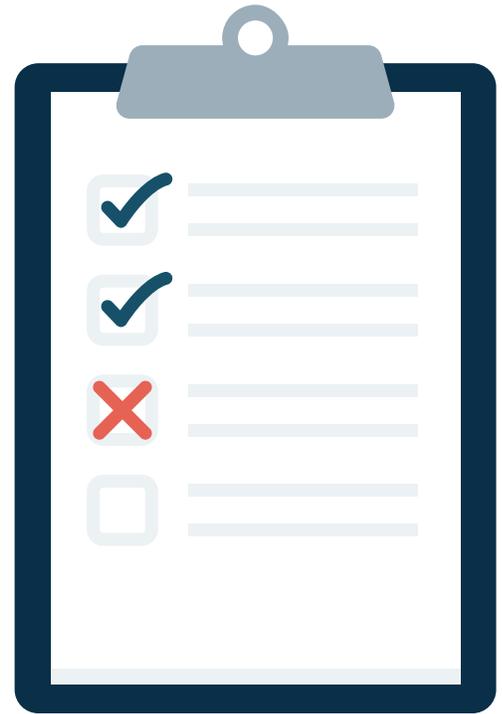
- [Ten ways to overcome test anxiety](https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/test-anxiety) (https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/test-anxiety)
- [An explanation of self-motivation](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/self-motivation.html), which can affect academic performance (https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/self-motivation.html)

2. Does your student complete homework? Homework completion shows determination, willingness to learn, and self-discipline.

- [How to study better in high school](https://blog.prepscholar.com/how-to-study-better-in-high-school) (https://blog.prepscholar.com/how-to-study-better-in-high-school)
- [Coping with school stress](https://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/coping-school-stress#1) (https://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/coping-school-stress#1)

3. Does your student get along with teachers, principals, other adults, and fellow students? Getting along with others is a building block to success. It doesn't have to come naturally, either. There are resources to help your student acquire social skills.

- [Four methods to get along with people](https://www.wikihow.com/Get-Along-With-People) (https://www.wikihow.com/Get-Along-With-People)
- [101 Ways to Teach Children Social Skills](http://www.socialskillscentral.com/free/101_Ways_Teach_Children_Social_Skills.pdf) (http://www.socialskillscentral.com/free/101_Ways_Teach_Children_Social_Skills.pdf)
- [An article about getting along with teachers](http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/getting-along-teachers.html) (http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/getting-along-teachers.html)



How to Not Ask “What do you want to be?”

Getting ready for the next stages in life (college and/or career) can sometimes be a big, scary topic for your students. Let's try and break it down.

“What do you want to be when you grow up?”

Something like this has been asked by parents and guardians (and wondered about by students) for years. As high school approaches it can become a constant burden, like a long-term assignment your family hasn't started. Worse, many of your student's friends will have a quick answer: “I'm going to be an engineer.” “I'm going to be a doctor.” “I'm going to be a professional athlete.”

The reality is, your student's friends (and their parents and guardians) are just as confused and concerned as you and your student are. What's the answer? Here are some thoughts.

It's okay not to know. Very few people can predict their eventual careers when they're in their teens. Most people change careers five to seven times, anyway.

Your student will take one or more online interest inventories. These inventories help students connect what they're good at, what their strengths are, and what careers match their interests and skills.

They are also good ways to start early conversations with your student and their teachers and counselors about high school endorsements and, later, possible career destinations.

Experience is the best teacher. Until your student actually has some contact with a chosen profession they won't know if they like it. High school is the perfect time to try on multiple careers.

The real question is not what students are going to be when they grow up, but what do they love to do? What is their dream career, and what skills do they currently have?

Remember, you and your student have time. Middle school and high school provide students with plenty of time to explore what they like and don't like. Even after high school your student will continue to explore new paths.



Interests **and** Skills

Interests are things your student likes and skills are things your student is good at. The two often go together. People tend to like (or love) what they're skilled in.

Improving skills and acquiring new ones is enjoyable, and pursuing interests can lead to various careers. The fact is your student probably has many more skills and interests than you both realize. Here are some skills that are often overlooked:

- making friends
- having a good sense of humor
- being a good son, daughter, friend, and citizen

Careers that appeal to your student's interests and skills are the best careers. They are your student's dream careers.

Before your student takes one (or both) of the interest inventories, it's useful to know what careers are out there. In order to understand what comes later we need to define two terms: *endorsement and career cluster*.

Endorsements: Think of an endorsement as a major for high school students. Similar to a major students have the option to to change their endorsement. Each endorsement generally requires your student to take courses (in a sequence) that relate to their professional plans after high school.

In Texas the default graduation plan now places all current high school students on a path to earn one of five endorsements. These are Arts and Humanities; Business and Industry; Multidisciplinary Studies; Public Service; and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, known as STEM.

These endorsements relate to **career clusters**, which are general areas of employment. Within each cluster are many, many actual careers that people are working in.

According to the US Department of Labor, there are sixteen career clusters.

- Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources (example: food scientist)
- Architecture & Construction (example: home designer)
- Arts, A/V Technology & Communications (example: television producer)
- Business Management & Administration (example: human resources manager)
- Education & Training (example: teacher)
- Finance (example: accountant)
- Government & Public Administration (example: legislative aide)
- Health Sciences (example: biotechnology researcher)
- Hospitality & Tourism (example: tour company manager)
- Human Services (example: mental health counselor)
- Information Technology (example: system administrator)
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security (example: emergency dispatcher)
- Manufacturing (example: quality assurance technician)
- Marketing (example: publicist)
- Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) (Example: automotive engineer)
- Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics (example: air traffic controller)



Before your student takes one or both of these short online interest inventories, suggest that they think about connecting what they like to do now with a career cluster and, later, an endorsement.

[Texas OnCourse - Students and Families](https://texasoncourse.org/students-families/by-topic)

(<https://texasoncourse.org/students-families/by-topic>)

[Texas Career Check Interest Profiler](http://www.texascareercheck.com/ExploreCareer/Interest-Profiler)

(<http://www.texascareercheck.com/ExploreCareer/Interest-Profiler>)

This profiler helps students discover areas they may be interested or skilled in based on their answers to short questions that are divided into categories such as realistic, social, and enterprising.

They will also be provided with a list of over seventy actual occupations that are considered a best fit, great fit, or good fit for them. Information about each occupation includes average salaries, education needed, further skills required, videos, and more.

[Texas Genuine "Find Your Future"](http://assessment.texasgenuine.org/Assessment.aspx)

(<http://assessment.texasgenuine.org/Assessment.aspx>)

After taking this quick assessment your student will be provided with three career clusters that fit their interests and skills.

Both of these interest inventories connect what students already know about themselves to current careers. Then they can show the education and training needed to pursue them. You and your student may have never heard of many of these careers, but your student has the skills and interests needed to be successful in them. As our career world gets increasingly more specialized, access to these free tools that link you to good stuff is priceless!



Can Your Student Afford to Be **Trained after High School?**

After high school, further education outside of apprenticeships and the military requires payment to attend. In the last twenty-five years, college tuition has increased by 440 percent—four times the rate of inflation over the same period.

[U.S. News & World Report - "Higher Education Bubble Will Burst"](https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/the-college-solution/2011/05/03/higher-education-bubble-will-burst)

(<https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/the-college-solution/2011/05/03/higher-education-bubble-will-burst>)

Finding your student's best postsecondary destination while they're in middle school ideal. Finding it before your student graduates from high school and has to pay for further education is critical. It's also free!

However, the average salary difference between someone with only a high school diploma and someone with two years of postsecondary schooling (like a two-year Associate of Arts degree or a professional certification or license) is roughly \$10,000 per year.

[SmartAsset.com - "The Average Salary by Education Level"](https://smartasset.com/retirement/the-average-salary-by-education-level)

(<https://smartasset.com/retirement/the-average-salary-by-education-level>)

If wages remained constant, the person with two years of training would earn \$200,000 more than the person with just a high school diploma over a twenty-year career. However, wages do not remain constant. In reality, with more skills and experience, the person with two years of training will actually make much more over time because their increased skills, experience, and knowledge will demand higher wages.

As you can see, the real question is this: Can your student afford not to be trained after high school?

Ways to Lower the **Cost of Postsecondary Education**

While the cost of postsecondary education is rising, there are ways to reduce it for just about everybody. It's never too early to think about financing your student's education.

The first step is usually to fill out the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](https://fafsa.ed.gov/) (FAFSA: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>). If your family qualifies for federal grants and loans, the amounts your student is awarded will be based on the FAFSA.

If your student is a Texas resident but not a US citizen, use the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) instead of the FAFSA.

If you or another guardian is active in the military, look into [parental GI Bill benefits](https://www.vets.gov/education/) (<https://www.vets.gov/education/>).

Tuition and fees might be covered at state schools if your student lived with a foster family or was adopted from the [foster system](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Post_Secondary_Education/default.asp) (https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Post_Secondary_Education/default.asp).

Find scholarships that fit your student at these and other sites:

- [Fastweb](https://www.fastweb.com) (<https://www.fastweb.com>)
- [BigFuture](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/) (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>)
- [Cappex](https://www.cappex.com/) (<https://www.cappex.com/>)

The first two years or so of college are usually spent on basic requirements. A two-year degree from a [Texas community college](http://www.tacc.org/pages/texas-colleges) (<http://www.tacc.org/pages/texas-colleges>) can save big money and help get your student into the program they want at a four-year school.

Instead of paying full price for college credits, students can often get them for less by earning those college credits while they're still in high school.

- They can take advanced placement (AP) classes and pass the [College Board's AP Exams](https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/home) with high scores (<https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/home>).
- If their high school partners with a local community college, they can take classes for dual credit for reduced cost (sometimes even for free).

Tools In The Tool Chest

A big surprise for most middle and high school students is that a lot of what they learn in school is directly related to what they will do in their future careers.

Whether they decide to become a journeyman plumber or an elevator installer/repairer the skills they learn in school pay off.

- [Journeyman plumbers](https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Journeyman_Plumber/Hourly_Rate) earn an average of \$33,000-\$76,000 per year. (https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Journeyman_Plumber/Hourly_Rate)
- [Elevator installers/repairers](https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Elevator_Installer_%2f_Repairer/Hourly_Rate) earn an average of \$44,000-\$148,000 per year. (https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Elevator_Installer_%2f_Repairer/Hourly_Rate)

What sort of classes in high school will tie into their career? Classes tie into endorsement areas. Here are some examples of each endorsement (there are five), careers your student might pursue, and high school courses that might be connected:

Arts and Humanities to be an actor, musician, artist, or writer: Your student should take high school courses in English, drama, and journalism.

Business and Industry to start your own business: Your student should take high school courses in math, accounting, and computer technology.

Multidisciplinary Studies allows your student to pick from a range of classes of interest that tie into career paths, college, or apprenticeship.

Public Service to be a lawyer or a corrections officer: Your student should take high school courses in law studies, sociology, and psychology.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) to be a chemical engineer or an IT systems manager: Your student should take high school courses in mathematics, computer science, chemistry, and physics.

For every course your student takes in high school, some skills will transfer from one subject to another. These important skills are not only part of every class but will be needed in your student's dream career. They include skills like study habits, test preparation and taking, time management, public speaking, and dealing with stress.

Test Preparation

[How to Get Ready for Tests in School](https://www.wiki-how.com/Get-Ready-for-Tests-in-School) (<https://www.wiki-how.com/Get-Ready-for-Tests-in-School>)

Time Management

[Five time management tips for high school students](https://www.unigo.com/get-to-college/college-prep/5-time-management-tips-for-high-school-students) (<https://www.unigo.com/get-to-college/college-prep/5-time-management-tips-for-high-school-students>)

Public Speaking

[Better Public Speaking](https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/PublicSpeaking.htm) (<https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/PublicSpeaking.htm>)

You'll notice that subjects like English, science, social studies, and math are not on this list. These skills are needed in all subject areas in school and all careers outside of school. Many of these skills are embedded and taught in content areas in school. For example, your student will use the same study skills for an English test and a biology test. The content is different, but the skill remains the same.

Middle and high school students are also frequently surprised to learn that adults still have to take classes, study, and pass tests long after high school memories have faded. Remind your student that many careers require tests to advance to the next higher pay level. Not only that, technology changes frequently, so training (the career word for school) is constantly needed to keep up.

The Bottom Line:

The skills your student learns in school will be valuable life-long tools in their career toolbox.



The World of **Work**

Keep three important items in mind as you and your student explore options. They are sometimes used interchangeably when talking about work, but they have different meanings.

Job: A unique work situation or position, paid or unpaid, at a particular organization. For example, the car engine technician position at a car repair company is a job.

Occupation: A group of related jobs that have similar duties, levels of responsibility, skills, knowledge, and physical demands. For example, automobile mechanic is an occupation. Within that occupation, there are many different jobs at different companies.

Career: The combination of education, occupations, and jobs that people do during their entire lives. For example, a person could go to automobile technician school, become an automobile mechanic, work as a car engine technician at a car repair company, move up to a manager position, take business classes, and then start a car repair company.

For the purposes of this guide, the goal for your student is to find a satisfying, worthwhile, and engaging career after high school. The most important people you and your student can connect with to help their career search are experts. Talk to their teachers and counselor. They are highly trained and have a wealth of experience to share.

College Options for **Everyone**

Does everyone need to go to college? This question is rarely asked by state lawmakers, school superintendents, and many parents. However, it's a somewhat radical idea that needs to be addressed. Consider some interesting facts.

Less than one third of Americans hold at least a bachelor's degree.

[20 Surprising Higher Education Facts](https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/the-college-solution/2011/09/06/20-surprising-higher-education-facts)

(<https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/the-college-solution/2011/09/06/20-surprising-higher-education-facts>)

As we have seen, more education generally leads to a higher income. However, there are many different ways to earn a living and many different paths that can take you there. There are a number of legitimate alternatives to four-year college.

Here are some your student might consider:

1. Start a Business. There are over 22 million people (14% of the work force) in the United States who are self-employed. Self-employment success came without college degrees for people like authors Isabel Allende and Maya Angelou; musicians Lady Gaga and Alicia Keys; music producer Russell Simmons; computer magnates Michael Dell,

Bill Gates, and Steve Jobs; movie producers Hillary Swank, Jennifer Lopez, and Walt Disney; automaker Henry Ford; and television hosts and fashion gurus Ellen DeGeneres and Steve Harvey.

Before you send your student off to top the charts or rock the tech world, though, consider that most successful entrepreneurs did attend college. Others, like Oprah Winfrey, returned to college after a few years in the workforce.

[Myth of the college dropout](http://theconversation.com/the-myth-of-the-college-dropout-75760) (<http://theconversation.com/the-myth-of-the-college-dropout-75760>)

[SBA.gov - "10 Steps to Starting a Business"](https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/10-steps-start-your-business/)

(<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/10-steps-start-your-business/>)

2. Attend a Community College. Community colleges attracted 7.2 million students in 2014. In fact, many people with four-year degrees are going back to community colleges for special certifications. Tuition is cheaper, classes are smaller, and students can meet with professors regularly.

[Trends in Community Colleges](https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/trends-in-community-colleges-research-brief.pdf)

(<https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/trends-in-community-colleges-research-brief.pdf>)

Many high schools offer dual-credit courses to high school students with a reduced rate of tuition. A dual-credit course counts for both high school and college credit. But not all classes taken at a community college will transfer or apply to degree requirements. Before enrolling your student in a dual-credit course, do the research—College for All Texans is a good place to start—and talk to your student’s counselor.

[Transferring Colleges](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/)

(<http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/>)

3. Become an apprentice. Apprenticeship is probably the oldest training program for careers, going back to the Middle Ages. Today, apprenticeships can be found in thousands of industries. Apprenticeship is employer driven and is based on the earn-while-you-earn philosophy. It creates thousands of highly skilled employees every year and is under the auspices of the US Department of Labor. Many apprenticeships lead to nationally recognized credentials.

[ApprenticeshipUSA Toolkit](https://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship/toolkit/toolkitfaq.htm)

(<https://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship/toolkit/toolkitfaq.htm>)

4. Get a job, any job. Your student could consider getting a job and working for a year or two before deciding on a college path. Things like showing up early and staying late, having integrity in the workplace, and treating customers and coworkers with respect will move them up the chain. Those seemingly simple characteristics are in high demand. Some positions and careers don’t require much, if any, formal education beyond high school:

- Construction helper (average salary \$32k)
- Medical records and health information technicians (average salary \$38k)
- Bus driver (average salary \$32k)
- Gaming service worker (card dealer, bingo caller) (average salary \$21k)
- Power line worker (average salary \$62k)
- Security guard (average salary \$25k)
- Elevator installer and repairer (average salary \$77k)

4. Volunteer. Spending a year or two volunteering not only gives back but builds character. Peace Corps and AmeriCorps are a good place for your student to start looking for ideas about volunteer life.

[PeaceCorps](https://www.peacecorps.gov/)

(<https://www.peacecorps.gov/>)

[AmeriCorps](https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps)

(<https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps>)

5. Join the military. Many graduates join the military right out of high school. Benefits include salary, health care, low to no costs for room and board, tuition for college, travel, vacation, and retirement. And of course, the pride of serving.

Downsides include requirements that your student move wherever the military needs them, they may be injured or killed, and they lose many civil rights.

[Join the Military](https://www.usa.gov/join-military)

(<https://www.usa.gov/join-military>)

6. Enroll in a trade school. Enroll in a trade school. Also called vocational school, technical college, or vocational college, these postsecondary institutions give students technical skills and certifications that prepare them for specific careers. Areas of study include nursing, information technology, health sciences, automotive or electrical technician training, dental assisting, and many more. These schools can be public or private, and programs can take anywhere from eight months to two years to complete.

[What Is a Trade School? How Can You Apply?'](https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-is-a-trade-school)

(<https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-is-a-trade-school>)

[The Top 30 Two-Year Trade Schools](https://www.forbes.com/sites/cartercoudriet/2017/06/19/the-top-30-two-year-trade-schools-colleges-that-fight-the-nations-skills-gap/#1a48a0db6675)

(<https://www.forbes.com/sites/cartercoudriet/2017/06/19/the-top-30-two-year-trade-schools-colleges-that-fight-the-nations-skills-gap/#1a48a0db6675>)

Do Some Research

Many students are taking a gap year prior to the start of their college career. Several colleges and universities are catching onto this trend and grant college credit in addition to funding students to volunteer or work abroad. But it's still best for students to earn admission to a college before requesting a year-long deferral.

[Consider These Alternatives to a 4-Year Degree](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2015/09/22/consider-these-alternatives-to-a-4-year-degree)

(<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2015/09/22/consider-these-alternatives-to-a-4-year-degree>)

So, is college for everyone?

There are serious pros and cons no matter what your student does. And there are opportunity costs for every choice they'll ever make in life.

College just happens to be one of the biggest decisions they'll grapple with, so the opportunity cost could well be high. Your student should thoughtfully consider whether to attend a four-year college right out of high school.

That's a tough task. Students have peer pressure, parental pressure, societal pressure—it's a lot for anyone to sort through. The college decision will impact the entirety of your student's life.

Don't assume that a four-year school is the best option just because that's what everyone else says.





Connect with Your Student's Counselor

Lesson 1. Who Is a Counselor and How Can They Help My Student?

Before doing Lesson 1, it might be helpful to know some important things about Texas public school counselors.

Education: All counselors have a Masters degree. Since there are alternative certification programs to becoming a certified school counselor their Masters degree does not have to be in the field of education. Before they obtain their master's degree, guidance counselors will have a background in education, psychology, or counseling as the major for their undergraduate degree—a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BS). Counselors have over six years of college education before they begin counseling.

Certificate: All counselors must have a counseling certification to be a counselor with a public school in the State of Texas. Counselors pay a fee to be certified.

Caseload: Most counselors at the junior and senior high school level have between three hundred and six hundred students on their caseload depending upon the district, the size of the school, and funding available.

Job Duties: Counselors are trained to provide a wide variety

of services for students and parents. They schedule students into classes, change classes for students, help with social and emotional issues, keep track of credits, grades, and graduation requirements, help with testing, present classroom lessons, help with postsecondary planning, do evening presentations for parents/guardians and students, and a whole lot more!

Complete These Tasks

1. Who is your student's counselor now?
2. Where is their office located?
3. How do you make an appointment to see your student's counselor?
4. Make an appointment with your student to see the counselor.

In Lesson 2, you will learn about how your student can talk to the counselor about making a career portfolio.



Student Success Tip #1

Students, as they make the transition from elementary to middle and onto high school, want to be independent as they start to deal with adult roles and responsibilities. It can seem as if they are pushing you away. Here, we provide simple yet powerful ways to assist your student on their journey.

1. Visit your child's school. Some parents and guardians feel out of place in their child's school. But it's vital to know where your child goes for 180 days of the year. If your first language is not English, many schools have multilingual staff who can help.
2. Find out who your child's teachers are and how to contact them (email, phone, etc.). It's important to know who each teacher is and how to reach them. They are the vital link between you, your student, and their well-being and success.
3. Visit the school website. Valuable information can be found on the school website (dates and times for conferences with teachers, upcoming events for parents and guardians, information about lunch programs and after school activities, etc.).
4. Make an appointment or contact your student's counselor, a vital link between you, the school, teachers, and administrators. Counselors love to help, and they provide vital information.

(<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/school-help-teens.html>)

10 WAYS TO HELP YOUR STUDENT
(IN ENGLISH & SPANISH)



UNIT 2

Exploring Career Pathways

What Are **Career Pathways** and Where Do They Lead?

A career pathway is made up of a number of things:

- Discovering information about careers.
- Finding out what they're good at and how they learn.
- Matching their skills to careers.
- Creating a career portfolio that showcases their unique talents and accomplishments and will grow as they do.
- Exploring what careers are actually about. That way, your student can see if they like certain careers. And it's okay if they don't!

In this second unit you'll be provided with a number of questionnaires and assessments (not tests) to find careers that match your student's skills, interests, and personality. You'll also be able to discover what sorts of training, education, classes, and certifications your student will eventually need to pursue careers that interest them.

Sample Pathways

Before we begin exploring your student's unique skills, talents, and possible careers, let's look at three sample pathways that will illustrate how a career pathway works.

CAREER #1

INTEREST/SKILL: Loves animals, takes care of pets

CAREER: Veterinarian

CAREER CLUSTER: Health Science

ENDORSEMENT: Public Service

YEARS OF EDUCATION NEEDED:

Eight years of college

TRAINING/DEGREE: Doctor of Veterinary Medicine plus a licensing test

WAGES: Starting around \$60,000 per year. Average pay is \$100,000 per year.

CAREER #2

INTEREST/SKILL: Plays video games, works on computers

CAREER: Video game programmer

CAREER CLUSTER: Information Technology

ENDORSEMENT: Business and Industry

YEARS OF EDUCATION NEEDED: Four to five years of college or on-the-job experience

TRAINING/DEGREE: Bachelor of Science in computer science

WAGES: \$72,000-\$95,000 per year

CAREER #3

INTEREST/SKILL: Loves cars, works on cars

CAREER: Automotive technician

CAREER CLUSTER: Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

ENDORSEMENT: Business and Industry

YEARS OF EDUCATION NEEDED: Twelve months to two years of technical college or on-the-job experience

TRAINING/DEGREE: Master mechanics need eight Automotive Service Excellence certificates and work experience. They must also pass an exam.

WAGES: \$40,000-\$120,000 per year

Now it's time for you to begin exploring your student's career pathway!

Career Clusters and Programs of Studies

Let's review. According to the US Department of Labor, there are sixteen career clusters.

16 CAREER CLUSTERS

1. Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources
2. Architecture & Construction
3. Arts, A/V Technology & Communications
4. Business Management & Administration
5. Education & Training
6. Finance
7. Government & Public Administration
8. Health Sciences
9. Hospitality & Tourism
10. Human Services
11. Information Technology
12. Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security
13. Manufacturing
14. Marketing
15. Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM)
16. Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics

Programs of Study: Within each of these cluster there are specific careers. Some examples are:

- Environmental systems
- Design and construction
- Performing arts
- Teaching and training
- Accounting and banking

If your student hasn't already, have them take this short journey of exploration about what careers they may like. It will ask questions about activities they enjoy, what they're good at and can do, qualities they think describe them, qualities that describe how others think of them, and subjects they find interesting in school.

When you are done it will provide your top three career clusters. We will use these three categories later to explore careers:

[TEXASgenuine Assessment](http://assessment.texasgenuine.org/)
(<http://assessment.texasgenuine.org/>)



Your Student Asks: "Who am I and **where am I going?**"

Huge questions, right? We'll narrow them down to manageable parts so you can lead your student to self-knowledge. The quickest way to do this is through interactive activities. Below are five that will help figure things out. We recommend that parents and guardians do these activities along with their students. Then compare notes.

The results will also lead your student to a better understanding of what high school courses to take, careers that might fit them, and the education or training they'll need after high school to pursue their dream career.

1. Who am I? (Personality)

While it can take a lifetime to figure this out, let's start simply by looking at personality in terms of career and

vocational choice. John L. Holland started developing his theory of career choice in the 1950s. It sorts people into six categories.

- Realistic (building, fixing, working outdoors)
- Investigative (thinking, researching, experimenting)
- Artistic (creating, designing, expressing)
- Social (helping, teaching, encouraging)
- Enterprising (persuading, leading, selling)
- Conventional (organizing, categorizing, recording)

Your student's answers will help them learn about their career interest area and what it says about them. Take a look at the [Holland Code Career Test](#).

(<https://www.truity.com/test/holland-code-career-test>) This can be a fun activity for parents and guardians, too.

2. What do I like? (interests)

Your student may have completed this interest inventory in Unit 1. If not, you and your student should do it now. It will suggest careers based on interests, resulting in concrete occupations to explore.

[Texas Career Check Interest Profiler](http://texascareercheck.com/ExploreCareer/InterestProfiler)

(<http://texascareercheck.com/ExploreCareer/InterestProfiler>)

3. What Am I Good At? (Aptitude)

Sokanu suggests career matches based on goals, workplace interests, interests in general, and personality. It also identifies strengths and weaknesses through what they call an Archetype Report. The dashboard allows for deeper research into top career matches, like salary, projected growth, and required education.

[Sokanu Career Test](https://www.sokanu.com/career-test/)

(<https://www.sokanu.com/career-test/>)

4. What Careers Match My Skills?

Connecting skills with possible careers on this site is a fun activity.

[Which Careers Match Your Skills?](http://www.educationplanner.org/students/career-planning/find-careers/careers.shtml)

(<http://www.educationplanner.org/students/career-planning/find-careers/careers.shtml>)

After that, your student can enter a career that looks promising on this site:

[What Do You Want to Do for a Living?](https://www.mynextmove.org/)

(<https://www.mynextmove.org/>)

It has over nine hundred career options and is organized by keyword, job title, or interest.

If you and your student took all the quizzes and thought about the results, you both have working answers to these questions:

- Who am I?
- What do I like?
- What am I good at? and
- What career(s) might be for me?

All this information is helping your student create a career portfolio. Your student will be working to create one with their counselor. Keep the results in mind as we move toward connecting who your student is with careers that suit them.



Help Your Student Develop a Career Portfolio

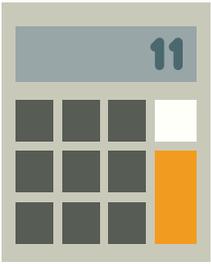
What Is It?

A career portfolio is a visual (or virtual) representation of your student's abilities, skills, capabilities, knowledge, and qualities. It is a collection of things that represent who they are and what they have done. A portfolio is based on the idea that learning is a lifelong, continuous journey.

Why Create One?

- Making one can be fun!
- Your student can use their portfolio for planning the transition to high school and for destinations after high school.
- Your student's portfolio will include information about them, their career ideas, and their educational plans.
- It's the link between school-based learning and the real world of adult learning, careers, and work.
- It adjusts as your student matures and changes.

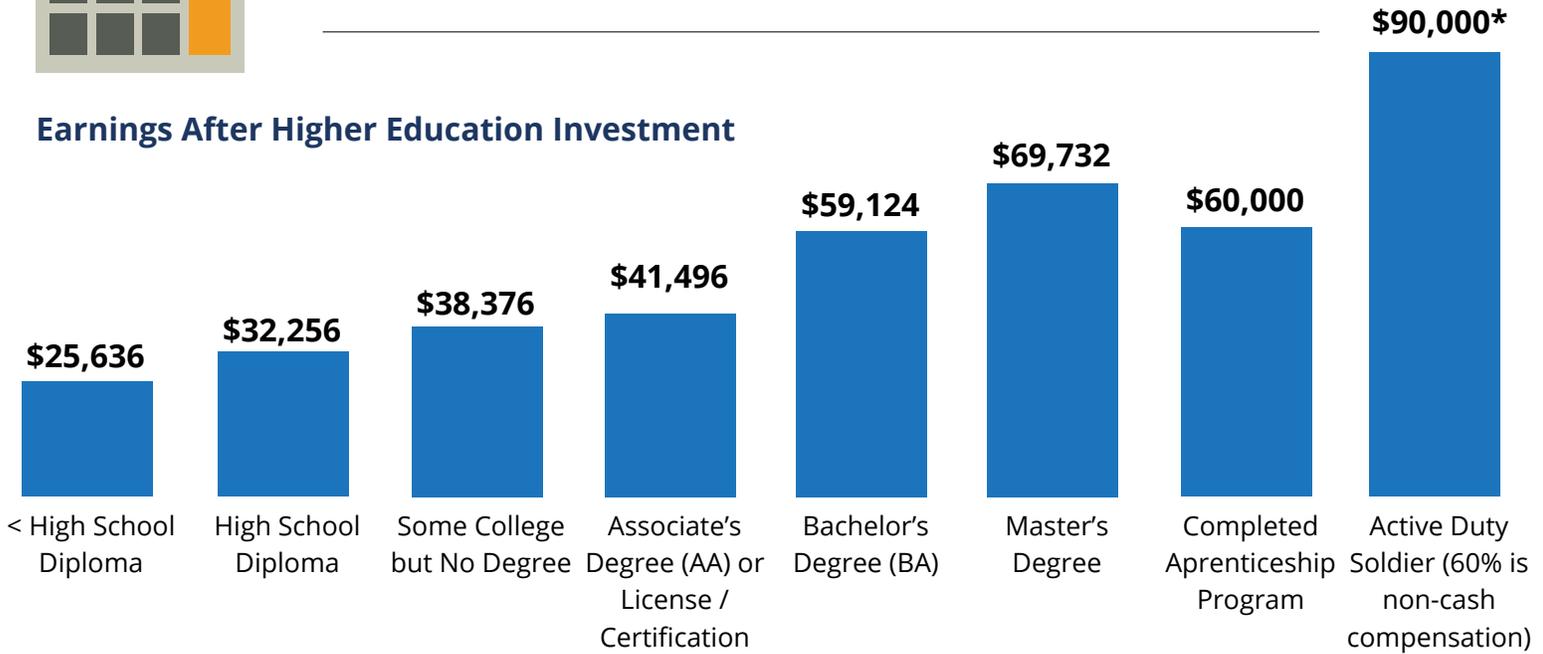
Your student will be working with their counselor on this. Follow the instructions in "Connect with Your Student's Counselor" at the end of this unit.



What's It All Worth?

School and learning are definitely not all about the money. Still, everyone needs to be able to take care of themselves as an adult. Let's look at some numbers.

Earnings After Higher Education Investment



Career Discovery Trip

You and your student now have seen how career pathways work. Your student has a list of skills, interests, and careers that might be of interest and an idea of the training and wages associated with getting further education.

But your student really doesn't know what these careers are like. How could they at this stage of life? How about investigating what these careers really involve? Take some time to explore the activities below with your student. Your student can also come back to them over time as their interests change.

1. CareerOneStop

On CareerOneStop.org, the sixteen career clusters are listed and the individual programs of study for each cluster are provided. Remember: programs of study are individual careers your student might enjoy.

Your student searched for and found three careers in prior activities. At CareerOneStop.org you can find videos that describe what each job requires, the pay you can expect, and the education required.

[CareerOneStop](https://www.careeronestop.org/videos/careervideos/career-videos.aspx)(<https://www.careeronestop.org/videos/careervideos/career-videos.aspx>)

2. Take Your Student to Work!

Perhaps your student is thinking of going into the same field as you or another guardian. Many employers allow employees to bring their child to work for a day to see what the job involves. If you or another guardian is an entrepreneur, you don't even need to ask permission! Sometimes this is easier to do during a school break to avoid missing class time.

3. Job Shadowing

Job shadowing is similar to taking your student to work, but they follow someone outside immediate family through the work day. At the middle school level, it may be harder to arrange. High school sometimes offers shadowing opportunities connected to specific classes. But if the careers of relatives, family friends, or neighbors interest your student, why not ask them?

4. Career Interview

A career interview is where your student lists questions to ask professionals in a field they're interested in. You will have to help with this one, but your student could get real answers to their questions in just a short time. Their programs of study (the careers they like and have skills for) can help them select local businesses. Many will be happy to participate.

5. Field Trips/Tours

Many businesses and colleges offer tours of their facilities. They can be both fun and very informative.

[19 Tours in Texas](http://factorytoursusa.com/state/texas/)

(<http://factorytoursusa.com/state/texas/>)

For a specific company tour, your student may need to contact the company's human resources office. Again, you will need to help your student with this, and in most cases you'll need to attend with your student.

6. Career Fairs

There are hundreds of career fairs that you can attend with your student. Some are specific to careers (criminal justice or teaching), but many offer a chance to talk with people representing businesses where you live. How can you find so many professionals who just love to talk about their companies? You can do a web search of your own city or try this site for upcoming fairs:

[Job Fairs in Texas](http://jobfairsin.com/texas)

(<http://jobfairsin.com/texas>)

7. Chambers of Commerce

Every city in the state has a chamber of commerce whose job is to increase the economic growth of their area. Typically most businesses in the area belong to their chamber. People at the chamber are friendly and knowledgeable. If your parent or you call them, they can frequently give you a list of businesses in the area, and perhaps some who would like to talk to you. [Texas Chamber of Commerce List](http://www.officialusa.com/stateguides/chambers/texas.html) (<http://www.officialusa.com/stateguides/chambers/texas.html>)

8. College Fairs

Colleges also participate in fairs you can attend. Middle school is not too early for your student to attend and talk to college admission people. [College Fairs](http://www.tacac.org/college-fairs) (<http://www.tacac.org/college-fairs>)

9. College Visits

If your student is interested in certain colleges, campus tours are easily arranged. Look for the word "tours" on the college website. Or just type in the name of a school and "tours" when you do a web search.

Even if your student is in middle school it's valuable to visit colleges. Why? It lets your student see what a real college is like before they need to make decisions.

Tours at colleges outside your region can also be done on school holidays or family vacations. More information is valuable when it comes to making decisions.

Your student can also take online virtual tours at colleges they can't actually visit. Not quite the same experience, but it is interesting.

10. Contact Trade Schools, Colleges & Universities

As we have seen, skilled and certified workers in professions like heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC); plumbing; dental hygiene; and cosmetology can enjoy well-paid, satisfying work. Why not have your student locate and contact a nearby school for information? They will also conduct personal tours of their premises.

[Texas Trade Schools, Colleges & Universities](https://www.trade-schools.net/locations/texas-schools-directory.asp)

(<https://www.trade-schools.net/locations/texas-schools-directory.asp>)

Student Success Tip #2

Locate a copy of the student

handbook. This valuable document tells students and their parents and guardians what is allowed (and not) in school. It covers the dress code, discipline policies, bullying policies, emergency information, contact numbers for staff, and a lot of other vital information. It is usually available online or as a hard copy from the main office at the school.

Attend back-to-school night. Find out when this is (usually early in the fall) and plan to attend and meet all your student's teachers. If you have more than one child in school, split the duties if possible. It allows you to put a face to a name, and teachers frequently provide information about homework expectations, testing, and classroom activities.

Organization. How does your student keep track of assignments? If they don't have a system, come up with one together. Lack of organization (when things are due, when tests are scheduled, etc.) is the number one reason many students fall behind. It pays off to develop a lifelong habit of good organization early. Provide a neat place for quiet work at home for your student.

Connect with Your Student's Counselor / Lesson 2 Career Portfolio Activity

Lesson 1. Recap

In Lesson 1 you found out who your student's counselor is and where their office is located. You made an appointment for you and your student to meet with them. If you haven't done that yet, do it now and come back to this activity later.

School counselors love students and are academic specialists. They are experts in school issues and do not do personal therapy (they refer students with serious issues to outside specialists). They are the number-one source of information to help you and your student navigate toward high school (and beyond) for college and career readiness issues. Making an effort to see the counselor will pay off big-time for both you and your student!

After the first meeting, it's better for your student to get used to requesting to see their counselor rather than having parents or guardians reach out. Why? It is a great social skill to approach an expert for information on their own. We learn by doing, and requesting an appointment and meeting with a counselor is an excellent life skill.

You can, of course, come along, but they should try it on their own. Don't worry. Counselors like students!

Before meeting with their counselor

Your student should fill in the worksheet provided as completely as they can.

When they meet with their counselor

Your student should expect to do the following:

- Introduce themselves
- Hand the counselor the completed form with their portfolio info
- Ask how the counselor can help them complete what is missing
- Ask if they should add something else
- Take notes of what they say
- Spend only about ten minutes
- Thank the counselor and say they'll be coming back sometime soon!

Keep in mind that your student can visit the counselor many times. There's no need to squeeze everything in or get all the answers in one appointment.

After meeting with your counselor:

Your student should think about what the counselor said. Have your student share the conversation with you. Suggest that they think of other things to talk to the counselor about.

In Lesson 3 your student will use what they've learned about career pathways to pick two possible endorsements, four high school courses in sequence for each, and one or more careers they like!

Homework matters. Be consistent in checking homework. Many schools have online ways to see which assignments have been turned in and current grades. The idea is not to hover over or micromanage your student. Rather, take a normal interest. Your student should have a place set aside to do work and a time to do it every day. Come up with a homework log together (on paper or virtual) and check it frequently.

Make time to talk about school daily.

Start the conversation with something positive, like "Did you have a great day today?" Be less concerned with academic progress than with how your student seems to be doing (happy, quiet, angry). While grades are important, they are only one part of who your child is. At dinner ask how everyone's day went. Make it a point for everyone in the family to share, and make this a regular activity.



Career Portfolio Fill-In

Name _____

Current Grade _____

1. What is your DREAM CAREER?

2. *Why* is it your dream career (be specific)?

3. What personality type (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional) are you and what sorts of activities do you prefer?

4. List at least five (or more) interests:

5. Use the [Texas Career Check Interest Profiler](http://texascareercheck.com/ExploreCareer/InterestProfiler) (<http://texascareercheck.com/ExploreCareer/InterestProfiler>), to list at least three careers that suit your skills. Include current salaries, predicted growth, and required education.

6. List three Career Clusters you find interesting and one job for each cluster:

- a. Cluster: _____ Job: _____
- b. Cluster: _____ Job: _____
- c. Cluster: _____ Job: _____

7. Which of the following have you done and what did you like (or not like) about them?

- a. Career One Stop
- b. Take Me To Work/Job Shadow
- c. Career Interview:
- d. Field Trip/Tour:
- e. Chamber of Commerce Contact:
- f. College Fair:
- g. College Visit:
- h. Trade School Visit:

8. Include the following if you have them: Most recent report card, best samples (at least three) of work from your classes (things like reports, pictures of projects, etc., results from any quizzes/tests you have).

9. Where would you like to go after high school to pursue your DREAM CAREER?

10. Why do you want to go there?



UNIT 3

Understanding Endorsements

Endorsements, Career Clusters, and Pathways, Oh My!



As noted in Unit 2, students earn one or more of five endorsements as part of their graduation requirements. Students must select an endorsement in ninth grade but can change their mind.

A student may graduate without an endorsement (not recommended) after their sophomore year. The student's parent or guardian can sign a form permitting them to omit the endorsement requirement. This frequently involves a meeting with a school official, the parent or guardian, and the student.

Endorsement

A related series of courses that are grouped together by interest or skill set. Students get an in-depth knowledge of a subject or career area they are interested in.

Career Cluster

A career cluster is a group of jobs and industries that are related by skills or products. As we saw in the previous units, the Department of Labor has identified sixteen career clusters.

[Career Clusters](https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/CareerClustersPathways.pdf) (<https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/CareerClustersPathways.pdf>)

Career Pathway

Within each cluster are pathways that correspond to a collection of courses and training opportunities to prepare your student for a given career. There are more than seventy career pathways to pursue.

Endorsements, career clusters, and career pathways are very closely related.

What Career Clusters Are in Each Endorsement?

Below you will find the five endorsements, the career clusters associated with them and, after each, a link to individual bulletins provided by the Texas Workforce Commission and the Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI). Each bulletin provides in-depth information covering wages, resources, and occupations under each endorsement. High school graduation requirements, possible high school classes, and education needed for some careers is also included. [Foundation High School Endorsement Bulletins](http://www.lmci.state.tx.us/shared/FHSEB/FHSEB.asp) (<http://www.lmci.state.tx.us/shared/FHSEB/FHSEB.asp>)

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Endorsement

CAREER CLUSTERS

- Engineering & Technology
- Science & Mathematics

STEM EXAMPLE

- **INTEREST/SKILL:** Chemistry, doing experiments
- **CAREER:** Chemical engineer
- **CAREER CLUSTER:** Engineering
- **EDUCATION AFTER HIGH SCHOOL:** four to twelve years
- **TRAINING/DEGREE:** Lab Science, Bachelor of Science, Masters of Science, PhD in chemical engineering
- **WAGES:** \$72,000-\$129,000 per year



Business and Industry Endorsement

CAREER CLUSTERS

- Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources
- Architecture & Construction
- Business Management & Administration
- Finance
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Marketing
- Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics

BUSINESS and INDUSTRY EXAMPLE

INTEREST/SKILL: Using smartphone apps

CAREER: App developer

CAREER CLUSTER: Information Technology

EDUCATION NEEDED AFTER HIGH SCHOOL: four+ years

TRAINING/DEGREE: Bachelor of Science in computer science

WAGES: \$47,000-\$103,000 per year

Public Service Endorsement

CAREER CLUSTERS

- Education & Training
- Government & Public Administration
- Health Sciences
- Human Services
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections, & Security

PUBLIC SERVICE EXAMPLE

INTEREST/SKILL: fighting fires, being physical

CAREER: Firefighter

CAREER CLUSTER: Law, Public Safety, Corrections, & Security

EDUCATION NEEDED AFTER HIGH SCHOOL: one+ years

TRAINING/DEGREE: Fire training academy, EMT certification, college degree in fire science

WAGES: \$47,000-\$75,520 per year

Arts and Humanities Endorsement

NO DEFINED CAREER CLUSTER

[Arts and Humanities Bulletin](http://www.lmci.state.tx.us/shared/FHSEB/PDFS/ArtsAndHumanities.pdf) (<http://www.lmci.state.tx.us/shared/FHSEB/PDFS/ArtsAndHumanities.pdf>)

ARTS and HUMANITIES EXAMPLE

INTEREST/SKILL: Theater and movies, acted in plays

CAREER: Actor

CAREER CLUSTER: Arts, A/V Technology & Communications

EDUCATION NEEDED AFTER HIGH SCHOOL: one to four years and work experience

TRAINING/DEGREE: Auditioning for parts and acting; Bachelor of Arts degree in theater arts, drama, or acting suggested

WAGES: \$52,000 (average) to millions per year

Multi-Disciplinary Studies Endorsement

- Four advanced courses from the other four endorsement areas.
- Four credits (one credit is two high school semesters) in math, social studies, English (including English IV), science (including chemistry and/or physics).
- Four credits in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or Dual Credit courses selected from English, science, social studies, economics, a language other than english, or fine arts.

NO DEFINED CAREER CLUSTER

[Multi-Disciplinary Bulletin](http://www.lmci.state.tx.us/shared/FHSEB/PDFS/MultiDisc.pdf) (<http://www.lmci.state.tx.us/shared/FHSEB/PDFS/MultiDisc.pdf>)

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY EXAMPLE

INTEREST/SKILL Hair and makeup, styling friends' hair

CAREER: Hairdressers, Hairstylist, and Cosmetologists

CAREER CLUSTER: Human Services

EDUCATION NEEDED AFTER HIGH SCHOOL: one or more years and work experience

TRAINING/DEGREE: Classroom and on-the-job training, pass state licensing or certification exam

WAGES: \$26,000-\$65,000 per year



Student Success Tip #3

Cell phones are great — but parents and guardians don't often know what's on their children's phone. It can come as quite a shock to find out. Cyber-bullying is real and many students suffer in silence, afraid to talk to parents or guardians about it. It's up to you (you're paying the bill) to set limits: time of use, shut off at school, you have their password, etc. It doesn't show lack of trust to set limits. It lets kids know you care. Come up with a written contract for cell phone use and stick to it.

Encourage independence. It's important to let middle school students have some independence. Sometimes this means they pick the sport or class they want, not what you would prefer. Common sense should govern how much independence you give your child. The basic rule is that you should know where they are and who they're with when

they aren't with you. Set up a system to be notified where your child is. Have check-in times and curfews (via texts, phone check-ins, etc).

Don't rescue them from natural consequences. Failure can teach people things they can't learn any other way. If your child fails a test, be concerned but don't assume it's the teacher's fault or that your child is "bad." Failure can teach us resilience, lead us to new knowledge, and make us more successful. Facing the consequences of our behavior is a responsibility and a skill. No one wins or is successful all the time—we're human! Relate actual times you failed to your child and discuss what you learned.

Connect with Your Student's Counselor

Lesson 3. Endorse Me!

Before your student meets with their counselor:

Across the state, districts offer different classes to fulfill endorsement requirements. Some offer more, some less.

1. Have your student make an appointment to meet with the counselor.
2. Before your student meets with the counselor, locate the course catalog for the school district or future high school. They might look like this:

[Houston ISD](http://www.houstonisd.org/planyour-path) (<http://www.houstonisd.org/planyour-path>)

[Dallas ISD](https://sites.google.com/a/dallasisd.org/ccentral/gib) (<https://sites.google.com/a/dallasisd.org/ccentral/gib>)

[Austin ISD](https://www.austinisd.org/academics/cte/hs) (<https://www.austinisd.org/academics/cte/hs>)

3. Next, have your student select two possible endorsements they are interested in, four courses in sequence they'd like to take, and a career (or careers) they'd like to pursue. Write them here:

Endorsement #1

4 Classes: _____

Career(s): _____

Endorsement #2

4 Classes: _____

Career(s): _____

When meeting with their counselor, your student should:

1. Show them the endorsements, classes, and careers they're interested in.
2. Ask the counselor for information about the specific classes offered at the high school they'll be attending as a ninth grader. For example, what is the class like? What do they do in the class?
3. Ask the counselor to help them match their dream career with the endorsement offered at that high school. If the classes and pathways aren't offered, do other schools in your district offer the classes and programs? Your student may choose to attend a different high school.

After meeting with their counselor, your student should:

Think about what the counselor said and share their visit with you.

In Lesson 4: You'll learn more about how your student and their counselor will map out a six-year plan for success in school.





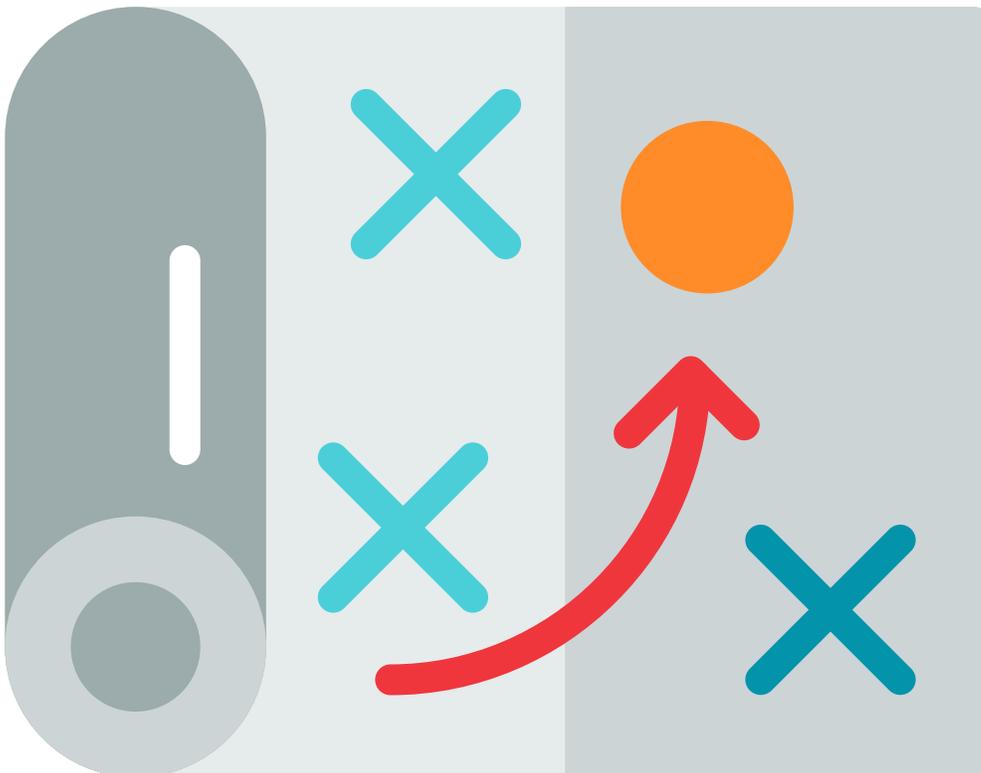
UNIT 4

Your Student's Personal Graduation Plan

“Why does my student need a personal graduation plan?”

Great Question! As a parent or guardian you should ask this question for a number of reasons.

- Without a plan it’s very difficult for your student to reach their graduation destination. Think of it like going on a trip without a map. Traveling without a map usually means you will get lost. Spending two years in middle school and four years in high school without a plan can be a costly waste of time.
- Taking classes without understanding why will frequently lead to lower grades, boredom, and lack of motivation.
- What your student takes today affects what they can take tomorrow. Prerequisites are classes required before taking a higher-level course. The first levels of many classes are the prerequisites for future classes. For example, students generally have to take Algebra I before taking Geometry, and English I before English II. This is also true for endorsement-area classes (Business and Industry, Arts and Humanities, Public Services, STEM, Multidisciplinary), which have an introductory class in ninth grade before you move up to the next level as a tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grader.
- School districts across the country usually require that students take three to four years of English, social studies, science, and math (plus elective classes they choose) in order to graduate from high school. This gives every student who passes these classes the background they need for their career after high school.
- Understanding why they’re required to take courses helps them be better consumers when it comes to picking courses.
- Ultimately, they take courses during high school to learn new skills and information, try different career paths, earn a high school diploma, and start on the next leg of their academic journey—life after high school!



“What’s the Plan?”

We’ve gone over endorsements, career pathways, career clusters, and different inventories related to your student’s skills and interests. Now it’s time to put all that knowledge to use and help your student create a Personal Graduation Plan (PGP). In order to understand how it all fits together, you need a clear idea of the three different diplomas available in Texas.

FOUNDATION HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM (22 credits)

- 4 credits of English (English I, II, III, and an advanced English course)
- 3 credits of math (Algebra I, Geometry, and an advanced math course)
- 3 credits of science (Biology, Integrated Physics and Chemistry or an advanced science course, and an advanced science course)
- 3 credits of social studies (World History or World Geography, US History, one-half credit US Government, one-half credit Economics)
- 2 credits of the same language other than English or 2 credits from Computer Science I, II, III
- 1 credit of physical education
- 1 credit of art
- 5 credits of electives

FOUNDATION HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM PLUS ENDORSEMENT (26 credits)

- All the Foundation High School Program courses plus
- 4 courses taken in one of the five endorsement areas (STEM, Business and Industry, Public Service, Arts and Humanities, or Multi-Disciplinary Studies).

DISTINGUISHED LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT (DLA) (26 credits)

- All the Foundation High School Program courses plus
- 4 credits in math including Algebra II
- 4 credits in science
- At least one endorsement

PERFORMANCE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to the three graduation plans, students may earn an additional acknowledgment on their transcript for outstanding performance in:

- Dual-credit college courses
- Bilingualism and biliteracy
- Outstanding exam scores on: Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, PSAT/NMSQT, ACT, SAT, ACT Aspire.
- Earning a state, national, or internationally recognized business or industry certification.

As noted in Unit 3, a student may graduate without earning an endorsement if, after their sophomore year, the student’s parent/guardian signs a form permitting the student to omit the endorsement requirement. (The form also requires the signature of the student’s counselor.)



Which plan is best?

The short answer is...

The Distinguished Level Of Achievement (DLA)

Why?

Free Classes and Training Now

Your student should aim high, learn as much as they can, and prepare for their future! Public education is the best bargain in education. They can take advantage of it by taking classes that matter to them!

Their next step requires more education

Careers (not just jobs) require further education after high school. High-demand industries require a credential or certification from a community or technical college or a traditional four-year degree. The military places highly skilled enlistees in better jobs. Apprenticeship programs require skilled students, intense studying, test-taking, and performance assessments to advance. Taking more (free) math and science classes before your student graduates from high school will help prepare them for those challenges.

Endorsement Required

Students cannot drop an endorsement pathway until the end of their sophomore year, and a parent or guardian must sign off. For the first two years of high school, everyone is pretty much on the same path.

Top 10%

If your student is in the top 10 percent of their graduating class and graduates with the DLA, they're eligible for automatic admission to any Texas public university.

TEXAS Grant

The DLA positions your student to be among the first in line for the TEXAS Grant to help pay for tuition and fees at any Texas public four-year university, as well as other financial aid options.

Competitive Edge

The DLA helps your student be a more compelling applicant at selective colleges and universities.

Finally, your student will be better prepared for *any* post-secondary destination with the DLA.

Student Success Tip #4

You are your student's role model. They may never say it, but your child looks up to you and models their behaviors on yours. So be the best model you can be. Show respect, really listen to what your child says, keep a positive outlook, work on anger management, and give them the freedom to be who they are. Make an actual list of what you value in life and share it with your child. It will let them know a bit more about who you are.

Be prepared to act if problems emerge. Life isn't perfect, and neither are people. If grades begin to slip, behaviors change, or things just don't feel right, find out what's going on. Keep track of who their friends are, when practices be-

gin and end, meet and talk to the parents of their friends, go into their room (knock first!), and invite their friends to your house so you can see them interact.

Be a parent/guardian, not a friend. Being a parent/guardian means understanding that you may not always be liked by your child. The truth is that they expect you to set and enforce limits and would be at a loss if you didn't. You can be the so-called bad guy for your child when you step in to protect them. Talk to your child about peer pressure and offer your help in dealing with it. They'll remember the offer.

Connect with Your Student's Counselor

Lesson 4. Big Dream, Flexible Plan

Before your student talks to their counselor, have them

1. Close their eyes (yes, really!): With their eyes closed, they should imagine their dream career or job and enjoy that vision.
2. Open their eyes and write down that dream career or job here: _____
3. It's likely they've explored this in past exercises and have some idea of the skills and education needed for the career they love. They also know the types of courses that will help them reach their dream destination.
4. For each grade level on the dream plan, have them fill in the classes they think they should take (or have taken) as part of their personal graduation plan. Be sure they select an endorsement for ninth grade.
5. If they don't know what to put in some subjects, leave them blank and then ask their counselor for suggestions.
6. Now have them make an appointment with their counselor.

When you talk to your counselor:

1. Introduce themselves (even though their counselor knows them by now, right?)
2. Show the counselor their **Six-Year Dream Plan**. The counselor will be impressed!
3. Ask for the program of study or course catalog for the high school your student will be attending. If the school doesn't have a copy, they should ask the counselor to show it to them online and ask, politely, if they can print it out.
4. Ask for help filling in blanks they have left. Be sure to let the counselor know what their dream career is and get advice and suggestions about the sorts of classes that would help them.



5. Ask about the different levels of classes available in their middle school and/or high school. The following may or may not be offered at their future high school:
 - Honors Courses
 - Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) courses
 - Advanced Placement (AP) courses
 - International Baccalaureate (IB) courses or program
 - Dual-credit courses (these are college classes taken either on-campus or at a college that count for both high school and college credit)
 - Advanced language courses
 - High school programs that offer a state, national, or internationally recognized business or industry certification or license.
6. Ask about when and where the following tests will be given. These tests are generally scheduled at specific times during ninth through twelfth grade, but it's a good idea to start thinking about them.
 - **ACT Aspire:** This test is designed to be taken every year in third through tenth grade so students and parents can assess student growth from year-to-year. The goal of Aspire is to identify learning gaps early and help students stay on track for college and career readiness.
 - **ACT:** Usually taken in the spring of eleventh grade so your student can send results in the fall of twelfth grade to schools that request them.
 - **PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test):** This is the practice test for the SAT, usually taken twice once in the fall of tenth grade and again in eleventh grade.
 - **SAT:** Usually taken in the spring of eleventh grade so they can send results in the fall of twelfth grade to schools that request them.
 - **Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA):** This is frequently referred to as the TSI. This test is produced by the College Board. It tests students on reading, writing, and mathematics to determine if they are college-ready for classwork. This is taken usually in the junior or senior year.

Your Student's Six-Year Dream Plan

Name _____

Current Grade _____

7th Grade

ENGLISH CLASS:

SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS:

SCIENCE CLASS:

MATH CLASS:

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS:

ELECTIVE CLASSES:

8th Grade

ENGLISH CLASS:

SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS:

SCIENCE CLASS:

MATH CLASS:

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS:

ELECTIVE CLASSES:

9th Grade

ENGLISH CLASS:

SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS:

SCIENCE CLASS:

MATH CLASS:

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS:

ENDORSEMENT CLASS:

ELECTIVE CLASSES:

ENDORSEMENT (choose one)

- Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM)
- Business & Industry
- Public Services
- Arts & Humanities
- Multi-Disciplinary Studies

10th Grade

ENGLISH CLASS:

SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS:

SCIENCE CLASS:

MATH CLASS:

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS:

ENDORSEMENT CLASS:

ELECTIVE CLASSES:

11th Grade

ENGLISH CLASS:

SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS:

SCIENCE CLASS:

MATH CLASS:

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS:

ENDORSEMENT CLASS:

ELECTIVE CLASSES:

12th Grade

ENGLISH CLASS:

SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS:

SCIENCE CLASS:

MATH CLASS:

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS:

ENDORSEMENT CLASS:

ELECTIVE CLASSES:

After your student talks to their counselor, they should

- **Take a deep breath!** They've done a lot of work and created a flexible dream plan for the rest of their middle school career and their upcoming high school career.
- **Chill, not stress.** This is a plan that is designed to change over time. Change is good and, as they experience different classes and activities, it's normal and expected that their plan for the future will change.
- **Share this plan** with you or another guardian, other relatives they admire and respect, and their friends and get feedback.
- **Keep this plan.** They've put a lot of hard work and energy into this plan. Keep it with their career portfolio.
- **Go back to it often** (at least once a year). Why? It's a living document that is now one part of who they are!



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