



HIGH SCHOOL PARENT GUIDE - MAKING COLLEGE THE REALITY



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MAKING COLLEGE THE REALITY: A GUIDE FOR HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS

All students need a plan for education after they finish high school, whether that plan includes a university, community college, technical school, or the military. Reliable information about postsecondary options is available online, through the school's guidance counselors, and through the resources included in this guide. By starting early in the high school years and working steadily toward the senior year, parents and teens will feel less overwhelmed when the time comes to finally apply and enroll in college.

Helping your high school student prepare for the future may seem overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be that way. Learning the "rules of the game" can help you and your teenager create a plan that will put them on the road to success. This guide was developed to help you help them. Together you can make the high school years successful and their dreams of college can become a reality.

Feel free to start exploring...



LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE: WHY GO TO COLLEGE?

Education plays an important role in preparing a person for the type of work he/she plans to do, and many jobs require more than a high school diploma. While in high school, students need to spend some time thinking about their postsecondary options. Continuing their education after high school is certainly going to give them more options for occupations and better chances of being hired.

But what if your teen isn't sure that he or she wants to go to college? What can a parent say when a teen says "why go to college?" Use the statements below to start a conversation with your child about college and the benefits a degree offers. Use the guiding questions to personalize the discussion and help students think through their own opinions about education after high school. Remind your teen that you believe he or she will succeed in college.

1. Don't be left out

- College teaches you *how* to learn, as well as what to learn.
- Skills in problem-solving and familiarity with technology will be required in most 21st century jobs.
- People change jobs several times in their careers. Postsecondary education gives you the skills necessary to adapt to new ventures.

Talk it over:

- What skills are needed in the work you are interested in doing?
- Where is the best place to learn those skills (college, on-the-job, military, technical school)?
- What is the earning potential for a high school education vs. a postsecondary degree?
- I want you to have an education beyond high school so you will be able to _____.

2. Love what you do

- When you have the education you need for a certain job, things just click.
- Education allows you to develop interests and abilities to build a career, not just do a job.
- There are a wide variety of postsecondary options that will fit your needs.

Talk it over:

- Ask your teen: Who comes to mind when you think of someone who LOVES their job? How do you know?
- What education was required for their profession? No matter what the job, there is always training required after high school.
- Tell your teen why you chose your occupation and what kind of education was involved.



LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE: WHY GO TO COLLEGE?

3. Get out there and mix it up

- College is a way to meet new people and learn about new places, cultures and viewpoints.
- Not everyone is like you. Take the opportunity to widen your circle of friends and experiences.

Talk it over:

- How do you think college will expand your world?
- What could you learn about living somewhere else?
- Here is what I learned when I lived away from home _____.

4. Earn a higher income

- Money isn't everything, but it helps you become independent.

Talk it over

- What do you want for yourself and your family?
- A good income could help you in the following ways: _____.

5. Have fun learning

- Sure, college is a lot of hard work, but it will open your mind to new ideas, skills and associations.
- College will challenge your mind and help you become a lifelong learner.

Talk it over:

- What interests you?
 - What would you like to learn more about?
 - What college might be a good choice for that?
 - Personally, I think you would be good at _____.
- I believe you can do it.

Additional Resources

- **Why Go to College (Todd)**
ownyourownfuture.com/10th/why/video-hub/why-go-to-college-todd
- **Why Go to College (Marcus)**
ownyourownfuture.com/9th/why/video-hub/why-go-to-college-marcus
- **Why Go to College (Gabriela)**
ownyourownfuture.com/9th/why/video-hub/why-go-to-college-gabriela
Three students offer perspectives on their postsecondary decisions.
- **Benefits of Going to College** **handout**
ownyourownfuture.com/files/documents/benefits-of-college-s.pdf
- **Making Your Parents Proud**
ownyourownfuture.com/10th/why/video-hub/making-your-parents-proud
This video addresses the ways that a student's decision to go to college affects her family—now, and in the future.
- **Why Should College be Your Goal?**
Go to collegeforalltexans.com, click on *Make a Plan*, choose *In High School*.
- Go to College.gov and click on **Why go to college?**



TRANSITIONING FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL

Even if you have forgotten the names and faces of your high school classmates, chances are, you can remember that first year of high school and the scary new problems it presented. Your kids are no different. For all their bravado, most of them are pretty unsure of themselves in that first year of high school. Try using your experiences to offer advice and guidance to your teenager as he or she makes that big transition. Use the tips below to help their adjustment.

TEN THINGS PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP STUDENTS MAKE A SMOOTH TRANSITION FROM MIDDLE TO HIGH SCHOOL

10. Be sure you both understand how high school credits work and how many are required. Find out more by watching the **Learning About Credits** video (ownyourownfuture.com/8th/prep/video-hub/learning-about-credits).
9. Know the name of at least one adult at the high school—principal, coach, teacher, or counselor—that either of you can ask for help.
8. Explore student organizations, athletics, band, choir and other options that exist in high school. It will help them form a supportive group of friends with similar interests, and start building a resume for college applications. Learn more about the importance of everyday leadership by watching the **Stand Up and Lead** video (ownyourownfuture.com/8th/prep/video-hub/stand-up-and-lead).
7. Keep an eye on upcoming events, grading periods, and announcements. Where are they posted at the high school? Are they on the school's website? Is there a text blast or an email? Where is the conference period of each teacher listed? Find out!
6. Urge your child to take advantage of any summer camps or orientation sessions offered at the high school. They will help both you and your child to learn as much as possible about the high school before the first day.
5. Meet teachers, counselors, and the principal before school starts, if possible. Get the scoop on attendance, grading, and tardy policies.
4. Get together with other parents and share information the about high school. Form an informal group that you can go to with questions.
3. Be sure your child understands the courses he or she needs to graduate and has completed their four-year graduation plan.
2. Ask for help! Find out what tutoring or extra help is offered for academics.
1. Just remember—everyone else is nervous about high school, too. Stick with your child, and they'll realize that high school is not as scary as they imagined.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:

Video:

**Transitioning from
Middle School to High
School**

[ownyourownfuture.
com/8th/why/video-hub/
transitioning-from-middle-
school-to-high-school](http://ownyourownfuture.com/8th/why/video-hub/transitioning-from-middle-school-to-high-school)

Students can get a look at the changes they'll face when they move up to high school—via two very different approaches to dealing with the new surroundings.



MAPPING OUT A FOUR-YEAR PLAN

With so many choices in high school, it's important for your child to plan ahead! Taking the right courses, striving to achieve, and earning the correct number of credits each semester in high school builds a strong foundation for their education after graduation. The resources in this module will help you make sure your student is on track.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In order to graduate on the Recommended High School Plan (RHSP) or the Distinguished Achievement Plan (DAP) in Texas, students must complete at least 26 credits, including four years of English Language Arts, math, science, and social studies/economics. Careful planning is important to ensure that all requirements are met so that students may graduate on time. An overview of state graduation requirements is included on the following page, and a full list is available [here](#). Check with the high school regarding any additional local graduation requirements.

HIGH SCHOOL CREDITS

Credits can be a complicated concept for students, but they are crucial to their success. The ***Learning About Credits*** video (ownyourownfuture.com/8th/prep/video-hub/learning-about-credits) introduces credits in an accessible way.

FOUR-YEAR PLAN

A four-year plan allows students to personalize their high school experience, incorporate classes that will lead to their future college major and career, and—perhaps most importantly—ensure that they graduate from high school on time. Students have a four-year plan on file at their school, but it is important to review it each semester to ensure that they are still on track. Encourage your student to investigate the career clusters available at their school with their counselor and discuss how they may take full advantage of the courses offered through their high school or local community college to challenge themselves, earn college credit early, and explore their interests while completing their requirements.



UNDERSTANDING CREDITS

THEY ALL COUNT...

Texas Recommended High School Program (RHSP) and Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) High School Graduation Plans

26 CREDITS REQUIRED*~

COURSES	RHSP CREDITS	DAP CREDITS
English Language Arts ENGLISH I, II, III, IV	4.0	4.0
Mathematics ALGEBRA I, ALGEBRA II, GEOMETRY, AND A FOURTH MATH COURSE	4.0	4.0
Science BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY, PHYSICS, PLUS AN ADDITIONAL LAB-BASED COURSE	4.0	4.0
Social Studies WORLD HISTORY, WORLD GEOGRAPHY, U.S. HISTORY SINCE RECONSTRUCTION, AND U.S. GOVERNMENT (0.5 CREDIT)	3.5	3.5
Economics	0.5	0.5
Physical Education	1.0	1.0
Languages other than English ANY TWO (RHSP) OR THREE (DAP) LEVELS IN THE SAME LANGUAGE	2.0	3.0
Fine Arts	1.0	1.0
Speech	0.5	0.5
Additional Components ELECTIVE COURSES	5.5	4.5
TOTAL CREDITS	26.0	26.0

Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) requirements also include student achievement on four advanced measures. Check with your counselor to determine which measures apply.

*The requirements outlined above represent the minimum state requirements for the RHSP and DAP plans. Districts may elect to add other course requirements. Be sure to check with your high school for your district's plan.

For a more detailed list of course offerings, visit www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=5324&menu_id=720.pdf



MY FOUR-YEAR PLAN FOR HIGH SCHOOL

Fill in the names of the courses that you plan to use to meet the state and district graduation requirements.

SUBJECT	MIDDLE SCHOOL	9 TH GRADE	10 TH GRADE	11 TH GRADE	12 TH GRADE
English Language Arts (4)					
Mathematics (4)					
Science (4)					
Social Studies (3.5)					
Economics (.5)					
Physical Education (1/1.5*)					
Health (0/.5*)					
Speech (.5)					
Foreign Language (2/3*)					
Fine Arts (1)					
Electives (6/5*)					
TOTAL CREDITS (AT LEAST 26)					

*The Distinguished Achievement Program requires a third year of Foreign Language, 1.5 credits of Physical Education, .5 credit of Health, 5 electives, and completion of 4 advanced measures. Advanced measures include:

1) an original research project (no more than 2), 2) an AP score of 3 or more, 3) an IB score of 4 or more, 4) a PSAT score of that qualifies student for recognition in certain National Merit Scholarship Corporation programs, and 5) completion of college courses, advanced technical credit, and dual credit courses with a grade of 3.0 or higher. For more information, see your guidance counselor.



MAKING COLLEGE AND CAREER CHOICES

Career and college choices are often difficult for teens. They feel pressure to decide on a career and just the right college, but they may be overwhelmed with the choices available to them, as well as the fact that a career may seem very far away. Parents can help them to make informed choices with a few words of advice accompanied by some websites that may provide direction in narrowing down the options.

1. Teens need to take time to explore different careers and imagine what jobs they would really like to do. Encourage them to select careers that they feel they would enjoy, not just those with high salaries. Share your job experiences. Talking to them about job satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment and a feeling of making a difference in their community can help them become more engaged in a career search.

The following websites focus on career investigation and interests:

- Own Your Own Future's **Future Finder** (ownyourownfuture.com/future-finder) is a quick way to discover potential careers based on interests. Each career in the **Future Finder** is linked to its cluster and program of study through Achieve Texas.
 - For more information about programs of study, the 16 Career Clusters, and how they relate to course selection, visit **AchieveTexas** (achievetexas.org).
 - **Different Types of Postsecondary Education** (ownyourownfuture.com/10th/find/video-hub/different-types-of-postsecondary-education) is a short video that spotlights college students, careers they chose and postsecondary options—such as community college, university and technical school programs that helped them meet their goals.
2. A career plan can help students break an abstract concept like a future job into smaller steps to help them reach their goal. A sample career plan can provide your child with an idea of how a plan could look. Visit knowhow2go.org, click on *Seniors*, and choose *Explore Your Interests* to find an example.
 3. Just as with career selection, students need to think about colleges that are the right fit for them and will help them achieve their future goals. They can investigate small or large colleges, technical schools or universities, and schools that are nearby or far away. They should focus on schools that offer the major they want to study and investigate financial aid availability. These resources can help them to explore their postsecondary options:
 - **Which College is Right for You?** asks students to think about their goals and use a questionnaire to help them narrow down the choices. Go to collegeforalltexans.com, click on *Get All the Facts*, and select *Find the Right College*.
 - **College Navigator** (nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator) helps teens investigate college choices and keep a list of them that they can revisit and add to often.

Remember, teens need time to think through this process and realize that even if they make career and college choices now, they may change their mind over time. Flexibility and good planning can help all of you feel more confident about reaching college goals.

NAVIGATING THE SENIOR YEAR

The senior year of high school is exciting for your family, but it can also be a little frightening. There are so many things to do, and so little time to do them. Parents need to know the steps their teens must take in order to complete their high school coursework, apply to colleges, secure and accept financial aid, accept a college offer, and get ready to leave home!

Check it out

A yellow rectangular graphic with the words "ROADMAP TO COLLEGE" in a large, bold, red, blocky font with a black outline. The graphic is tilted slightly to the right and is held in place by two yellow paper clips. A blue arrow points from the "Check it out" text to this graphic.

ROADMAP TO COLLEGE

The roadmap on the following page will help you and your senior see at a glance what needs to be done each month of the senior year. Copy this map and hang it in a convenient location, so the whole family knows what happens next in the college-going process.

ROADMAP TO COLLEGE

NOVEMBER

Attacking Your College Applications

- ✦ Continue/complete ApplyTexas or the Common Application.
- ✦ Apply to at least three colleges (by required deadlines).
- ✦ Submit scholarship applications.



OCTOBER

Making College Choices

- ✦ Undecided? Visit, check out catalogs and virtual tours, and attend college and/or career fairs.
- ✦ Already picked college? Finalize your list and consult with your parents and counselor.
- ✦ Continue to work on your college applications.



SEPTEMBER

Tell Us About Yourself

- ✦ To do: create a college application portfolio, update your résumé, check all high school transcripts/records, ask teachers for recommendations, finish draft college essays for applications, get ApplyTexas PIN, investigate scholarships and start applying!

AUGUST

Test Yourself: SAT & ACT

- ✦ Take (or re-take) your SAT or ACT test. Have your scores sent to chosen colleges.
- ✦ Note deadlines: testing, admissions, scholarships, financial aid and housing.



DECEMBER

Maximize Your Break

- ✦ Request your transcript.
- ✦ Request that admissions test results be sent to your choices of colleges.
- ✦ Submit any remaining applications. (If deferred, express your continued interest to the college.)

FILL OUT FAFSA

FEBRUARY

Financial Aid: A Package Deal

- ✦ Make sure all financial aid forms have been submitted and received.
- ✦ When you get your Student Aid Report (SAR), check it for any errors. (If you do not get it within 3 weeks of filing the FAFSA, check online at www.fafsa.ed.gov.)

MARCH

Spring into College

- ✦ Apply for more scholarships!
- ✦ If you receive rejection letters, consider applying to other colleges.
- ✦ If you know where you're going, send in housing deposits.
- ✦ Ask your counselor to send mid-year transcripts.

SUMMER

AFTER GRADUATION Focus on Fall

- ✦ Find a job (maybe related to your college major) to help with expenses.
- ✦ Apply now for work study jobs, if you qualify.
- ✦ Attend summer orientation on your new campus.
- ✦ Prep for and take any placement exams.
- ✦ Register for classes ASAP.
- ✦ Get your college physical and shots.
- ✦ Ask questions!



JANUARY

FAFSA/TASFA 101

- ✦ Ask your parents to do their taxes ASAP.
- ✦ Apply for a FAFSA PIN. Attend financial aid workshops.
- ✦ In January OR February, submit completed forms ASAP.
- ✦ Keep searching out—and applying for—scholarships!



MAY

Graduation Celebration

- ✦ Pick a college and notify the admissions office by May 1.
- ✦ Last chance to send in housing deposits!
- ✦ If you are wait-listed and really dedicated to a school, seek advice from your counselor.

APRIL

College: Decisions, Decisions

- ✦ Attend a spring college weekend for prospective students.
- ✦ Consider your financial aid package options and request a review if needed.
- ✦ Create a budget for college needs. Determine if you will need a student loan.



START



USING A COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Once you have helped your child make decisions about their postsecondary education, the next big step is completing the college application. The college application process can seem complicated, but planning ahead, staying on schedule, and keeping track of the details can help ease the stress. Use the tips and tools below for a successful college application season!

1. To help you and your child get started, view the **Figuring Out the College Application Process** video at ownyourownfuture.com/11th/prep/video-hub/figuring-out-the-college-application-process.
2. Find out if the colleges your student is interested in accept common applications. Many Texas public and private schools accept the **ApplyTexas** application (www.applytexas.org). If your child is exploring schools out of state, check to see if they accept the **Common Application** (commonapp.org). Students may apply to multiple schools, but only fill out the application package once.
3. Consider visiting the school guidance counselor for personal help or attending a parent session that offers assistance in the process.
4. Use the attached checklist to keep your teen on track. Keep it in a handy location on your computer or print a copy and add it to the college portfolio your child is creating.



COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Name: _____

Date: _____

Number of months
until high school graduation: _____

Use this checklist to plan your college application process. For each task, list the target date (month and year) by which you plan to have each task completed. Highlight anything you plan to do within the next three months. If you've already completed an item, add the completion date to the far column.

Remember, you can always return to a step—especially those related to college exploration. The important thing is to get started!

TO-DO LIST	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED? ADD THE DATE
1. Research at least ten colleges you are interested in attending		
2. Narrow the list to 5 schools and find their application deadlines. List colleges and deadlines here: 1) 2) 3) 4) 5)		
3. Get a calendar (hard copy or electronic) to keep track of important dates. A wall calendar is also a good reminder because you will see it often!		
4. Create a folder or portfolio (either a paper or an electronic folder) for all college app documents. Keep a copy of everything (correspondence, online applications, emails, etc.)		
5. Clean up your online image (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and get an email address containing your name for your college applications. The pictures you post and your email address give an immediate impression of who you are to college admissions offices and scholarship committees.		
6. Go to Apply Texas (www.applytexas.org) and/or use the Common Application (www.commonapp.org) to set up an account and get a PIN number. Keep the PIN number in a safe place so you can access it easily in the future.		



COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST

TO-DO LIST	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED? ADD THE DATE
7. If you have not taken the SAT or ACT, register for it now and mark the dates on your calendar. When you take the test(s), ask for your scores to be sent to your top five schools. If you plan to send additional reports later, allow three weeks for delivery of scores.		
8. Check into application fee waivers, if applicable.		
9. Complete the online application(s). Ensure that you have completed all the parts—and proofread! Submit the applications and any necessary application fees.		
10. Put together a packet for all those who are writing recommendations for you. It should include: Recommendation forms and dates due to you (so you can mail them yourself) and a résumé or summary of your accomplishments.		
11. Ask teachers/counselors/others for recommendations.		
12. Give packets to recommendation writers.		
13. Request transcripts from your guidance counselor. Pay attention to whether the college or scholarship committee requires an official or a non-official transcript.		
14. File financial aid forms promptly. Do this as close to January 20 of your senior year as possible!		
15. Check status of you application about three to four weeks after sending it.		
16. By mid-January of senior year, check with your high school to see that your fall semester grades have been sent to each college.		
17. If an interview is required, make sure to mark the date it is scheduled.		
18. If you receive a significant award or honor after you apply, send a note or email to the admission office and ask them to add it to your file. Be sure your name and SSN are also included.		
19. Remember to keep your grades up! Colleges will require that you submit a final transcript that includes your spring coursework. Some schools may even revoke the admissions offer based on poor spring grades. Finish strong by completing dual credit courses and AP tests.		
20. Be sure to sign up for summer orientation at the college you'll be attending.		



FINANCIAL AID

When it comes to college financial aid, there are many resources available to parents. The list below will help you locate good information that can guide you through the process. For specific advice, make an appointment with your child's counselor or attend a financial aid workshop offered for families. If the service is available, secure a mentor or financial aid advisor through your child's school to help you and your child to fill out the forms.

*The following tools
will help you
get started...*



1. The **Cracking Financial Aid Code Words** (ownyourownfuture.com/12th/pay/video-hub/cracking-financial-aid-code-words) video can help you and your teen review some of the terms that are used in the financial aid process.
2. The **Language of Financial Aid** (ownyourownfuture.com/12th/pay/video-hub/the-language-of-financial-aid) video details the various types of financial aid, including loans, grants, and work-study. It will be important to know these terms when the financial aid award arrives.
3. The **College For All Texans College Aid Calculator** (collegeforalltexans.com/apps/collegemoney) can do the math for you. Use this handy website to see the actual costs of certain colleges AND to calculate what a family might be able to receive in financial aid.
4. The OYOF **College Costs** worksheet (ownyourownfuture.com/files/documents/college-costs-s.pdf) will help you determine expenses associated with college attendance.
5. The **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** (fafsa.ed.gov) is your gateway to federal financial aid. Fill it out as soon as possible during senior year! For more information about federal financial aid and how to access it, visit college.gov and click "How to Pay."
6. Saving for college starts right now. Visit collegeforalltexans.com, click on *Make a Plan*, and choose **Saving for College** to learn about college savings plans for Texans.



POWER OF SCHOLARSHIPS

Video: *The Power of Scholarships*
(ownyourownfuture.com/11th/pay/video-hub/the-power-of-scholarships)

Hear how one student's life changed when he realized that scholarships could help shape his future.

Scholarships can amount to a little or a lot as part of a financial aid package. They come from a variety of sources (private, corporate, community groups, and colleges) and are awarded to students based on any number of criteria—athletics, gender, income, talent, academics or religion, just to name a few. No matter which type of scholarship your child chooses to pursue, encourage them to keep the following tips in mind.

1. **Start early**, even in your freshman year. Scholarships are available for extracurricular activities, like community service, leadership, and church. But in each case, involvement and persistence are important factors—meaning you want to be involved with an activity for a significant period of time in a real way to make it really count.
2. **Listen up.** Most scholarships are due at the same time each year and have the same requirements. When you hear an announcement for a scholarship, write the name, due date, and requirements down in your planner—even if you can't apply until later. When you get a new planner, transfer all the due dates, and make notes to yourself to start early.
3. **Search and research.** Use the internet, ask your counselor, and visit websites like the U.S. Department of Education's **Financial Aid and Scholarship Wizard** (studentaid2.ed.gov/getmoney/fin_aid_wizard).
4. **Apply for any and all** scholarships that you might have a chance of winning.
5. **Get organized.** Keep track of the important information about each scholarship, including deadlines, requirements, and sources.
6. **Be sure to follow all the directions** and let someone proofread your applications before sending them.

The possibilities are endless, and keeping track of what's available might be difficult. This organizer can help you track scholarships and determine which ones you may qualify for:

NAME OF SCHOLARSHIP	SOURCE/ ELIGIBILITY	APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS	DEADLINE	COMPLETED

SUPPORT AT SCHOOL

As you and your teenager continue learning about college preparation, it's important to remember that no one expects you to have all the answers. There are many helpful tools and resources online, but you can always find support at your child's school. Guidance counselors, educators and college awareness programs are available to answer questions, provide information and generally help as needed as your family embarks on the college-going path.

Here are a few tips on how to maximize the support offered at school:

1. Get to know your child's teachers, counselors, coaches, and administrators. Let them know you are interested in your child's progress and want to know more about the college-going process. School personnel can help with career counseling and interest inventories, course selection, information about early college admissions exams, and much more! Do not hesitate to ask for information and support.
2. Beyond sharing the information in this guide with your own child, one of the best things parents can do is to talk with other parents and teens. Let the school know you are interested in using this guide and forming a network of other parents who are also seeking information about high school issues and college access. Through school organizations, or even outside of school, become an "information sharer" with other parents. Many of them might have children in college right now, and they can be a great source of help to other parents. After all, they survived it!
3. Take advantage of college awareness activities offered by the school district. Many schools offer college tours for students and families, summer programs on college campuses, or college preparation or financial aid workshops for students and parents. Check the school website or talk to a school counselor to find out what is available and take advantage of it whenever possible. School involvement helps parents know exactly what is going on at school and helps everyone build a support system for your child.
4. If possible, find a mentor for your teenager. Mentors can offer mentees career advice, set up possible internships, provide a different perspective on issues, and help teens to build self-confidence. A mentor's advice doesn't take the place of a parent's guidance, but a mentor can serve as another advocate for teens (and their parents) during the high school and postsecondary years.



COLLEGE READINESS RESOURCES

Here are a few key resources you may find particularly helpful. Knowing where to go to find the right information is essential. Perhaps you and your teen can work together to develop a list of your favorites and use them along the college prep pathway. Here are some sources and information that will get you started.

COLLEGE IN TEXAS

College for All Texans (collegeforalltexans.com)

College For All Texans is maintained by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and contains important links and tools for information about Texas universities, colleges, community colleges or technical schools. It includes information about applying to college and financial aid. Also includes a College Locator and the College Match-Up.

ApplyTexas (www.applytexas.org)

ApplyTexas addresses admissions information for two- and four-year colleges in Texas and hosts the common application and some scholarship applications for schools across the state.

PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

Own Your Own Future (OYOF) (ownyourownfuture.com)

A project of Texas GEAR UP, OYOF provides college readiness resources for Texas middle-school and high-school students—including videos, web resources and activities. It also includes resource portals for parents and educators.

College.gov (college.gov)

Federal website for students containing information and resources about planning, preparing, and paying for postsecondary education. The site also includes a collection of tools for parents embarking on the college-prep path. To access the section designed for parents, click on “parents/family” at the top of the page.

KnowHow2Go (knowhow2go.org)

This site allows students to explore different ways to prepare for college based on their current grade level and includes quizzes, stories, links, videos and important timelines—all in preparation for higher education goals.

SAVING AND
FINANCIAL AID**Student Aid on the Web**

(studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp)

A free federal information source for students and parents that focuses on preparation for college, funding and financial aid. It includes information about the **FAFSA4Caster** (fafsa4caster.ed.gov), which allows students to establish an account early and estimate their aid. When students reach their senior year, they will also need to complete the **FAFSA** (fafsa.ed.gov).

Texas College Savings Plans

(window.state.tx.us/education)

Helps parents learn about the savings plans available through the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts and the way they help make postsecondary education attainable.

LOCAL
RESOURCES

Your school counselors, teachers, and administrators are also an excellent resource. They can help with the following information:

- Career counseling and interest inventories
- College-bound course requirements
- Local graduation requirements and options
- Financial aid information and resources
- College application information
- College entrance exam schedules and information
- Letters of recommendation to colleges
- Specific college readiness questions you may have