



Dream to Reality

A College and Career Information and
Activity Packet
for Middle School Students



DREAM TO REALITY!

Dear Student,

Many people, including your parents, teachers, neighbors, and friends are probably beginning to ask you, "what do you want to be when you grow up?" Well, now is the time to begin to answer those questions. Now is the time to start dreaming, thinking about what your interests are and what you need to do to achieve your goals. Now is the time to begin turning your DREAMS into REALITY!

The information provided to you in this packet will allow you to "Dream Big". Do not limit yourself! If you could be anything you wanted, what would it be? Work through the goal-setting packet and at the end, you will have a sense of what you need to do, to make that "Big Dream" a reality!

As you are working through this packet, be sure to share the information with your parents and teachers. It is important that they know your goals, so they can work with you to achieve them. It is important that you take advantage of all resources as you plan for your future. Parents and teachers are one of the most valuable resources you have, so take advantage of their knowledge.

Congratulations on taking "the first" very important step of planning your future. Good luck with all your future aspirations and remember, Dream Big!

Step One: Goal Setting

Dreaming Big

The first step in deciding what you want to “be” is to dream. Don’t set any limitations. At this stage in planning for your future, anything goes. It’s important that you decide what you enjoy doing. What are your interests? What do you like to spend the majority of your time doing? If you could do something for five days a week, eight hours per day, what would you do? You may think it is too early to start thinking about your career and what would make you happy. However, it’s never too early to start thinking about and planning for your future. **Being in the wrong job is like being in your least favorite class, only for eight hours a day, day after day, year after year.**

In Step One of this packet, you will have the chance to evaluate your interests and determine what career may best fit your future goals. You will have a chance to build your college/career portfolio. Be sure to put everything pertaining to your college and career interests in your portfolio. This will serve as a very valuable tool as you continue to plan and make decisions about your future.

Build Your College and Career Portfolio

Purpose of the College and Career Portfolio:

- The College and Career Portfolio will be a way to organize all the information collected about your college and career goals.

What you will need to get started:

- A three-ring binder and a three-hole punch (check with your teacher.)

Items to include in the College and Career Portfolio:

- Interview someone in your “dream” career. During the interview, you should take notes and include them in your portfolio.
- Gather a list of skills needed to be proficient in your career choice.
- Research colleges that offer programs in your career. This may include writing a letter or e-mail to the Admissions Office asking for information on a program.
- Determine what the cost of college will be, how much you need to save for college, and what options are available for you to pay for college.
- Write a career plan...both you and your parents should sign this. In what profession are you interested and what do you need to succeed in that profession? Write down all the steps it is going to take in order to make your dream a reality.

What Kinds of Jobs Can You Get with a College Education?

Two-Year College (Associate Degree)	Four-Year College (Bachelor's Degree)	More Than Four Years (Various Post Graduate Degrees)
Computer Technician Surveyor Registered Nurse Dental Hygienist Medical Laboratory Technician Commercial Artist Hotel/Restaurant Manager Engineering Technician Automotive Mechanic Administrative Assistant Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Heating, Air- Conditioning, and Refrigeration Technician	Teacher Accountant FBI Agent Engineer Journalist Insurance Agent Pharmacist Computer Systems Analyst Dietitian Writer Investment Banker Graphic Designer Social Worker Public Relations Specialist	Lawyer Doctor Architect Scientist University Professor Economist Psychologist Clergy Dentist Veterinarian Public Policy Analyst Geologist Zoologist Management Consultant

Source: Compiled from various sources by the Planning and Evaluation Service of the [U.S. Department of Education information for students](#).

My Interests

Directions:

Complete the following chart. You may be asked to share your answers with others.

My past interests	My current interests	Jobs relating to my interests	Future career(s) relating to my interests

Have your past and current interests remained the same?

Why have your interests changed?

Do your interests have a career path?

What career do you think fits best with your interests? Check out CareerShip on the [Mapping Your Future](#) Web site.

Career Fact Sheet

Directions: Use this worksheet to find out information on a career that interests you. Be prepared to share information with your class. Don't forget to include this information in your College and Career Portfolio.

I would like to know more about a career in _____.

To learn more about the career in which I am interested, I should talk to:

-
-
-
-

I can go to the following places to learn more about this career:

-
-
-
-

Questions I should ask about the career include the following:

-
-
-
-

After researching my chosen career, these are the things I like about it:

-
-
-
-

After researching my chosen career, these are the things I dislike about it:

-
-
-
-

Career Interview

Directions: Think of someone you know who is working in a career field that is of interest to you. Set up a time convenient for them that you could interview them either in person or over the phone. Use the following questions as a starting point in the interview process. Include this information in your College and Career Portfolio.

1. What career did you dream about when you were in middle school/high school? Did it change? If so, why?
2. How did you decide on this career choice?
3. Did you attend college?
4. If so, where did you go?
5. What type of degree/diploma did you earn?
6. What's the best thing about your current career?
7. What do you wish you could change about your current career?
8. Other comments about your career or education.

Step Two: Preparing for Your Future

Making Your Dream Your Reality

You may think that the time to start to prepare for college and your future is a long time off, but in fact, it is right around the corner. In just a couple of years you will find yourself in high school and soon after that applying for college. Now is the time to dream about what you want to do and then find the appropriate steps to make that dream a reality!

Below are some suggestions to help you prepare for your high school and college career.

- Take challenging classes in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, the arts and foreign language. Even though these classes may be a little more difficult they will truly help in preparation for your college courses.
- Develop strong study habits. Do not put off studying for a test until the last minute. Review each day and the information will stay with you longer.
- Prepare for the ACT exam. Practice tests are available from [ACT](#).
- Talk to adults about their careers. Researching careers in which you are interested will help you determine if it is truly something you would enjoy. Your guidance counselor will be able to assist you in finding sources of information on career planning.
- Get involved in extracurricular activities. You will develop time management and leadership skills. These skills will benefit you no matter what career you choose.
- If you haven't started saving for college, now is the time to start. Investigate sources of financial aid and savings options.

College Fair

Purpose:

- You will have the opportunity to learn what college opportunities are available to you.

How it is done:

- You will research and prepare a report on an individual college. Your class will participate in a College Fair. You and your classmates will have the opportunity to present information learned about the colleges researched. This will give you the chance to learn information on a variety of colleges rather than just the one you researched.
- Use the *Letter to the Office of Admission* in order to help you obtain information from a particular college.
- Use the Know/Want/Learn Chart as a guide in doing your research.

*****This information should be added to your College and Career Portfolio.*****

Know/Want/Learn Chart

Directions: Use this chart as you prepare your report for the College Fair. List what you already know about the college in the *Know* column, what you want to know in the *Want* column, and any new information gathered in the *Learn* column.

KNOW	WANT	LEARN

Your Address
City, State, ZIP Code
Date

Office of Admission
Name of College
Street Address
City, State, ZIP Code

Dear Admission Representative:

My name is (your name) and I am a student at (school). I will graduate from high school in (month, year) but in the meantime, would like to get a head start on my college planning.

Please send me information about your institution, including admission requirements, program descriptions, and college costs. Currently I am considering (name of program) as my field of study.

My parents and I also want to investigate all possible sources of financial assistance. Any information you could provide on scholarships and grants for your institution would be appreciated.

I am also interested in taking a tour of your college and meeting with an Admission Counselor, Professors, and students.

Please send the information to (address). If you would like to contact me, you can do so by calling me at (phone number) or e-mailing me at (e-mail address).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Your Signature)
Your Name

Who Do I Talk to and What Do I Ask?

As you prepare for college and your future career, there are going to be many questions for which you need answers. Your school guidance counselor will serve as one of your most important resources. Anytime you have questions on how to plan your high school schedule, balance your workload, or make plans for college, go to your counselor.

Listed below are some important questions, compiled by the [College Board](#) you should ask to ensure that you are going in the right direction.

1. What classes should I take in high school to help me prepare for college?
2. Should I take certain classes each year in order to complete all the requirements?
3. Are there elective courses that you recommend I take to prepare for college?
4. Does our school have Advance Placement courses available?
5. When will I have a chance to take the [PSAT](#)? How do I practice for the [ACT](#)?
6. Are there any activities planned to help me prepare for college?
7. What should I do at home and over the summer to get ready for college?
8. What grade point average will I need in order to get into college?
9. Is there a list of the area college fairs?
10. Where have other students from this school gone to college?
11. Do you know anyone that is going or has gone to a college on my wish list?
12. Will you be able to write a college recommendation for me? How can I help you in that process?
13. What are the requirements or standards for the honor society?
14. Where can I learn about scholarships and awards for college?
15. What forms do I need to fill out for financial assistance?

Your counselor is there to help you, but they also have many other students they are working with. Give them plenty of time to meet your request. Know your deadlines and be sure you have ample time to meet them.

Student Responsibilities

Much of the responsibility for obtaining an education belongs to the student. If you are a student, you are expected to assume the following responsibilities:

- establish and maintain good communication with your teachers; speak up and make teachers aware when you do not understand; seek help when needed; be alert to academic expectations; show a genuine interest in your work;
- be punctual on all assignments and commitments;
- have regular attendance;
- budget your time and complete all assignments;
- eat balanced meals and get at least eight hours of sleep on nights before school days;
- become familiar and comply with your school's dress and behavior expectations;
- become familiar with your school's graduation requirements and the admission and graduation requirements for the college of your choice;
- be aware of your academic progress;
- keep yourself and your parents aware of all important dates: be alert to ACT, PSAT, and SAT registration and testing dates; be informed of all meetings related to college planning and financial aid;
- set realistic and challenging goals and strive to exceed your personal limitations;
- become actively involved in school; and
- promote and maintain a healthy family relationship. Involve your family in your experiences and in your plan for success.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents play a major role in the success of their student attending college. Therefore, parents are also expected to assume responsibilities of the education of their student. If you are a parent/guardian, you are expected to assume the following responsibilities:

- provide a quiet study area in the home;
- discuss work that is being done in classes and follow up to see that all assignments are completed;
- communicate a genuine interest in schoolwork and assist with assignments whenever possible;
- insist on punctual and regular attendance at school and in all classes and study halls during the day;
- refrain from scheduling family trips and other events that interfere with school;
- notify the school if an emergency calls for a full or partial day of absence;
- ensure that your student gets balanced meals and sufficient rest;
- establish and maintain good communication with your student's teacher and counselor;
- assist your student in developing realistic and challenging goals;
- assist your student in assessing his or her progress in attaining these goals;
- provide constant support and appropriate praise for your student's efforts and accomplishments;
- become acquainted with your student's friends and their family; and
- encourage your student to become actively involved in curricular and extracurricular activities.

Step Three: Financing Your Future

Paying For Your Education

In this packet, you have had the opportunity to start dreaming about your future. A college education is a very important part of that dream – and an increasingly expensive one. But a college education may be the wisest investment you can make for your future. Studies show that college graduates earn an average of 50% more than workers without degrees, increasing their lifetime earnings by nearly \$1 million.

There are several ways to pay for a college education: save, pay as you go, borrow, let someone else pay or a combination of these. All of these options can play a part in making your college dream come true. Planning is the key – and the time to begin is now.

The next few pages will be useful as you talk with your parents about financing your college education. You will learn how saving a small amount now can mean a larger amount later. You and your parents will be able to decide what steps need to be taken financially to make your dreams a reality.

As you review this section answer these questions.

- How much will it cost for me to go to college?
- How much am I able to save for my college education every week?
- What are some ways I can earn money?

An aid to helping determine how much you save for college is the [college savings calculator](#).