

Session 4 – Are You Getting Ready?

Activity 1 – Self-Test

College is still years away. Yet there are things to do and plans to make as early as eighth grade that will help get you to college. Are you doing them? Are you getting ready? Complete this simple self-test and find out if you are on the right track.

Answer True or False to each question. Then read on to find out what your answers mean.

_____ 1. My goal is to graduate from at least: high school, a community college, or a 4-yr college.

_____ 2. I've done some research - reading or talking to people – and I've learned a few things about financial aid and how people pay for college.

_____ 3. I have already taken Algebra I, or I plan to take it no later than ninth grade.

_____ 4. After Algebra I, I'll take Geometry and then Algebra II.

_____ 5. In high school, I plan to enjoy myself working at a couple of “extra” activities – maybe I'll join a club, play a sport, or volunteer to help a community group.

_____ 6. Someone in my family (parent, guardian, older sib) talks to me about school and schoolwork fairly often. They're interested, or encouraging, or even pushy.

_____ 7. Most of my friends plan to go to a four-year college.

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Worksheet 1 – Keys To College

What gets you into college? People who know about students, colleges, and statistics tell us that these are some of the keys:

Set a goal. If your goal by tenth grade is to attend a four-year college, you're far more likely to go than students who don't have that goal. (If the goal is set earlier, so much the better!) Why is this so? Colleges don't come to you; it's your job to get ready for them. Set a college goal, and you're more likely to learn what steps get you to college and then to take them.

Learn about financial aid. Some students don't set a college goal because they think college costs too much. But those who learn about financial aid know that you don't have to be rich to go to college – so they're more likely to set a college goal, make a plan, and end up in college.

Start Algebra early. You can go to a two-year college with any high school degree, but for a four-year college, you must take certain high school classes. These classes teach what you've got to know in order to do college work. That's why they're required before (pre-requisites to) college classes. Example: Algebra I. It's been called a gatekeeper class, because you must pass through the algebra "gate," and walk down a path lined with other math classes, before you can enter college. Start it by ninth grade, so you'll have time for your other math.

Then keep going. Take geometry next. You'll be on the "college track," learning the right stuff, and the odds are four out of five that you'll end up in college. We repeat: Statistics say that you may be Black or White, Asian or Latin, rich or poor, it doesn't matter. About 80% of kids who set a college goal (that's question #1) and get started on the college math path (questions #3 and #4) do end up in college.

Enjoy yourself. In high school, pick a couple of things you really like to do and spend time doing them. Play on a team. Learn ballroom dancing. Run for class secretary. It's your life. Enjoy it. You'll not only have fun. Your fun will pay off. Studies show that students who do more than study are students who end up in a four-year college.

Talk to family. Students who go to college say that back in high school, someone talked to them, often, and about school and school work. It's hard to go it alone. So try to find someone – if not family, a favorite teacher, a neighbor, a religious leader – who'll help you sort out your future plans, talk to you about school, and urge you to stick to your schoolwork (we all need a little push now and then).

Choose your friends. Do your friends plan to go to college? If so, you are an amazing six times more likely to enter college than someone whose friends don't plan on college. If you aim for college but friends don't, getting there is harder. (After all, you'll need to make choices your friends won't like – choosing to spend time on study, take different classes or even go to a different high school.) If you're in this situation, give it some thought: What are some ways you can handle it?

PS – You don't need a perfect score on this test. If you said “true” to only one question, you're twice as likely to enter a four-year college as someone who said “false” to them all. If you answered “true” to two or three, you've already taken steps down that college road. So, hey: Just keep going.

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Activity 2 – Keeping A Record

High school and college admissions boards are looking for well-rounded students. Complete the worksheet regarding your extra-curricular activities. It is important to keep a detailed list of clubs, sports teams, community organizations, projects, etc. This information can strongly influence your chances of admission to a high school or college. Include the organization name and date.

List of School Clubs/Organizations

List of Community Service Activities

List Certificates and Honors Awarded

List Sports Activities

List Special Projects

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Activity 3 – Personal Statement

Whether you are applying for a job, for a scholarship, or to college often a personal statement is required. The information you provide in your personal statement can cause your application to stand out from the rest. It is important that you practice this task. What do you want a potential employer to know about you? What do you think would stand out with a college admissions board?

Be sure to tailor your statement to fit the purpose of your application. Introduce yourself in an honest and memorable way. Write a personal statement of your choice. You can write it as a part of a job application, scholarship application or college application. The choice is yours.