

High School—The Future is Now

Whether your child goes to work right after high school, enters college or chooses some other option like joining the Armed Forces or Job Corps, it is always good to prepare ahead. He or she will have many serious decisions to make, and by being involved and informed, you can help make the path a little smoother. Consider this:

- 48 of the 50 fastest growing jobs in the United States require some type of education beyond high school.
- People who don't have post-secondary training are three times more likely to be unemployed than those who do.
- People who have some training after high school make more money and have better opportunities for career advancement than those who have only a high school diploma.
- Freshmen without a career goal or academic major when they enter college are more likely to drop out.
- If your child has started thinking seriously about his or her future before graduating, their chances for success during post-secondary education (technical training or college) increases.

Making High Schools Work

We all have a stake in the success of our youth, whether we have school-age children of our own or not. Drawing from the work of leading researchers and educators from around the country, the Alliance for Excellent Education has identified ten key elements that every high school should have in place to ensure they are successful. This checklist can help you, together with other parents, school leaders, and community members, identify the strengths and weaknesses of the high schools in your community:

1. Challenging classes are available to every student.
2. Relationships can be formed between all students and school staff.
3. Extra help is available for those who need it.
4. Connections are made between book learning and the real world.
5. Family and community involvement is encouraged and valued.
6. The learning environment is safe from physical harm, verbal abuse, and other threats.
7. Every teacher is qualified to teach in their subject; knows how to teach all kinds of children; and is given the time and support to plan lessons, review student performance, and improve their skills.
8. School leadership is capable of providing instructional leadership and support.
9. Every teacher and student has the tools and resources they need to be successful in school.
10. All community members have access to user-friendly information that gives a clear picture of how well students are doing (e.g., dropout rates, student performance on state standards)

Source: Elements of a Successful High School. 2006. The Alliance for Excellent Education, www.all4ed.org.

North Carolina Parent Information and Resource Center (NCPIRC)
a project of the exceptional children's assistance center

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Making High School Count

Whether or not you have a college degree, the job market today requires a workforce that is prepared to take on the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Preparing your child to enter the workforce starts with you helping them make the most of their high school years. Below are some things that your child will need to do to be successful in high school and get prepared for life after high school:

Get Involved

Getting ready for college or the workforce isn't all academic. Your child should find something he or she really likes doing, and learn to do it well. Colleges and employers are attracted to young people who are responsible and have shown a commitment to learning.

Do the Work

Whether your child plans to go to college or directly into the workforce, he or she should plan to study and work hard throughout all four years of high school.

Get Help

Is your child having trouble in a class? Many schools have peer tutors, students in upper grades who'll help for free. Your child should talk to his or her teachers or counselors and let them know if he or she needs extra help.

Read

Your child should read something—magazines, books, graphic novels, newsletters—at least 30 minutes every day, beyond study and homework. Your child's strength in reading is essential no matter what he or she decides to do.

Get the College-Bound Facts

How will your child know all the right moves to get into college? He or she should ask someone who has done it. You and your child should get to know the school counselors. Your child may want to talk to a career planner at a local college, or a trusted teacher. Research on the internet can also be helpful.

Family Support

If you haven't been to college yourself, you may think you can't help your child. That's not true. You can talk to his or her counselors and help your child stay on the right path. Your support will be critical as he or she begins to make important decisions about the future.

Mentors

Even though you are supportive of your child's ambitions, the encouragement of other adults who can lend their enthusiasm will also help ensure your child succeeds.

Adapted from Discover 10 Ways to Jump-Start College Planning: Help Your Child Take the Right Steps Now. 2007.

Taken from the, **PTA Goes To Work Parent Guide**
www.pta.org

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