



Dear Parent:

Your child's high school years are extremely important. In fact, they are so important that they will affect what choices your child may have for the rest of his/her life!

*The **"MAKE HIGH SCHOOL COUNT"** booklet has been designed to help your 8th grader use the next four years wisely to prepare for higher education and for whatever the future holds. This **Parent Guide** has also been developed to give **you** a better understanding of what is in the student booklet. Together they can provide a wonderful opportunity for you and your 8th grader to talk openly about his/her future. We suggest you read both this guide and the booklet first, and then go over the booklet page by page with your student. Afterward, if you have questions, talk with your school counselor and use the free resources and services listed on the last page of this guide.*

*The **"MAKE HIGH SCHOOL COUNT"** booklet and **Parent Guide** are the result of the work of many people who care about your 8th grader and his/her future. We hope you will use these materials to guide both of you through the next four years. Good luck!*



YOUR CHILD may already have an idea of what he/she plans to do after high school. This idea may be realistic, like going on to college* or working in the family business. Or, it may be more of a dream, like becoming a professional athlete. Or, perhaps your child is interested in many different possibilities at this point. Whatever future your child dreams about, decisions that you and he/she make now and during high school can be very important!

Remember: Young people change their minds often, so the best plan is to keep options open. Here are some general things your child can do over the next few years to prepare for whatever the future holds.



Take control--learn to be a good student. Many young people do not enjoy going to school. They feel trapped in classrooms where they sometimes do not understand what is being taught. They may feel embarrassed to ask for help. Page 4 of Make High School Count gives tips for overcoming some of the barriers to learning. Even though these ideas may seem simple and just common sense, they are important to take seriously. Talking about these tips with your child may help him/her understand that it is within his/her own power to be a better student.



Take the right courses. Since education after high school is necessary for many careers, it is important to make sure the high school courses he/she takes will prepare him/her for college (just in case!). Pages 5-8 of Make High School Count give suggestions for taking the correct courses to do just that. A chart is also there that your student can use to lay out his/her individual plan for taking high school courses after working with the school counselor.

*To make things easier, we have used the word "college" to mean any type of education after high school. This could include two- or four-year colleges and universities, private career schools, vocational-technical schools, and graduate schools.



Use time outside of school wisely. Often, a good student is merely someone who has certain "habits", both in and out of school, that help make learning easier and more enjoyable. Page 9 of Make High School Count suggests some of these habits that are fairly simple to develop. Talking with your child about what the family can do to support his/her good study habits may be very helpful. Family support and understanding can make a big difference in how well a student does in school.



Start thinking about the future. Now is the time for your child to begin to explore what to do with the rest of his/her life. Whether your child goes on to college, goes to work right out of high school, or chooses some other option like joining the Armed Forces, Page 10 of Make High School Count gives some pointers on how to prepare. There are also some very good and easy-to-use computer programs, like ACT's *Discover*®, that can help young students begin to explore different careers. School counselors are the best people to ask about these programs.



If college is a goal, don't worry about costs at this point. If your child decides to go on for more education after high school, the chances are very good that there will be financial assistance to help make it possible. The government and the schools themselves offer many types of financial help for families that cannot afford the full cost. Pages 11-12 of Make High School Count give some general information about how to deal with educational costs. There will be time to look into financial help for college during the last two years of high school. If it is possible for your family to begin to save even a small amount of money each month for your child's college education, some states have excellent college savings plans to help you do it in the best way.



Get help when you need it. There are MANY people and organizations in every state that really care about how well your child does in school and in life. Some helpful phone numbers and sites on the Internet are listed at the end of this guide. They can provide answers to many of the questions you and your child may have over the next few years. Be sure to use these free public services.



Where to get your questions answered...

(Remember: The best place to start is always with your middle or high school counselor!)

General Questions about Education After High School, College Financial Aid, and Saving for College:

U.S. Department of Education: 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327)
State Departments of Education

Internet Web Sites:

National Parent Info Net
U.S. Department of Education
ACT, Inc.
The Coalition of America's Colleges
& Universities
The Financial Aid Page
City Year

www.npin.org
www.ed.gov/thinkcollege/early
www.act.org
www.collegeispossible.org

www.finaid.org
www.cityyear.org

Free Publications (Booklets, Brochures, Posters, Etc.):

U.S. Department of Education publications (available at 1-800-USA-LEARN)

- *A Checklist for Helping Your Child With Homework*
- *7 Good Practices for Families*
- *Think College? Me? Now? A Handbook for Students in Middle School/Junior High*
- *Getting Ready for College Early*
- *Strengthening Your Child's Academic Future*
- *School Shopping Tips*
- *Parents Guide to the Internet*

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