Preparing for College and Careers

A GUIDE TO LIFELONG SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

This publication was produced by Families In Schools (FIS) with generous support from the JPMorgan Chase Foundation.
Dear students and families:

Success in school and in life is every parent’s hope for his/her child. Success in school leads to better social and economic opportunities and an improved quality of life. By 2018, most occupations will require schooling beyond high school and in most cases a college degree. In the next two decades, California will need 3.2 million new college-educated workers – nurses, teachers, engineers and others – to remain competitive in a global economy and replace the retiring “Baby Boom” generation. The demands of the 21st century require that tomorrow’s workforce – today’s students – are prepared as lifelong learners capable of adapting to rapid technological advances and an unpredictable economy.

**A college education is the best insurance for our children’s future success.** When youth go to college, everyone wins – our children win; our families win; and our communities win.

To be prepared for college and viable careers, youth must graduate from high school having mastered basic skills and taken necessary, but oftentimes confusing, steps to continue on with higher education. Young adults need guidance through the college and career-preparation process. Parents play a central role in helping their children navigate the complex pathway to college and careers. Planning for college and careers is a family affair.

Families In Schools supports parents and their children in navigating the road to college, meaningful careers, and lifelong success. As a partner to families, we offer this resource guide to assist parents and their middle and/or high school children understand the steps that must be taken to gain admission and financial aid for college. Together, we will build a better future for our children and our country.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Chair, Board of Directors
Families In Schools

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**Benefits of Higher Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>2009 Unemployment Rates</th>
<th>2009 Median Weekly Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than a HS Diploma</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>$454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>$626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College, No Degree</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>$699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>$761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>$1,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>$1,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Degree</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>$1,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>$1,532</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FAMILIES

In Middle School...

☐ Meet often with the school counselor to discuss your child’s academic progress.
☐ Attend school-sponsored field trips to colleges and participate in workshops about college preparation.
☐ Help your child maintain a high Grade Point Average (GPA), especially in English and mathematics. Math and foreign language classes begin to count for college eligibility as early as 7th and 8th grade, so monitor those grades too!
☐ Encourage your child to participate in academic enrichment and extracurricular activities during out-of-school time.
☐ If your child has taken Algebra I, encourage him/her to take the PSAT exam in 8th grade (October).
☐ Explore the high school options that best suit your child’s needs and interests (e.g. charter schools, magnet schools, etc.).
☐ Visit your child’s future high school and meet with a guidance counselor before she/he begins high school.

In High School...

☐ Meet often with school counselor(s) to discuss your child’s academic progress. Tell the counselors that you want your child to prepare for college.
☐ Help your child maintain a 3.0+ GPA in college preparatory (A-G) classes.
☐ Ask about programs and activities to help you and your child transition smoothly into high school.
☐ Learn early about financial aid options and Expected Family Contribution (EFC) by using the FAFSA 4Caster (www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov).
☐ Attend workshops to learn about financial aid and the college and career preparation process.
☐ Encourage your child to participate in academic enrichment and extracurricular activities (i.e. summer programs, college classes, etc.).
☐ Help your child keep track of application deadlines for scholarships, colleges, and financial aid.
☐ During the fall semester of senior year, encourage your child to apply to a variety of colleges.
☐ During the spring semester of senior year, apply for federal and state financial aid.
☐ Visit college campuses with your child, and encourage them to keep all options open.
☐ Help your child select the college that best meets his/her interests and career goals.

“The best thing I can do to ensure my child’s future is to help my child stay focused and study hard. There are many opportunities for her, and it is possible to reach high goals.”

– Parent

COLLEGE PLANNING RESOURCES

California Colleges
www.californiacolleges.edu

KnowHow2Go
www.knowhow2gocalifornia.org

College Board
www.collegeboard.com

Go College
www.gocollege.com

College Answer
www.collegeanswer.com

Black Excel: The College Help Network
www.blackexcel.org

Historically Black Colleges and Universities Mentor
www.hbcumentor.org
THE STUDENT’S ROLE

1. Set goals for college and careers.
   - Dream big!

2. Know what you need to do to prepare for college and careers.

3. Seek support to reach your goals.

“You have to believe in yourself to reach your dreams and you have to plan for college because it is possible to get there.”
   - Student

STUDENTS

In Middle School...
- Tell your teachers and counselors about your plans to go to college.
- Develop strong time management and study skills.
- Take challenging classes in English, math, science, history, geography, the arts, and a foreign language.
- Get A and B grades, especially in your English and math classes.
- Join clubs or programs that can develop your skills.
- Build a network of friends who also want to go to college.
- Participate in programs that enable you to visit colleges, take college classes, and experience college life.
- Take Algebra I, and pass with a C or better.
- If you are taking Algebra, take the PSAT exam in 8th grade (October).
- Explore a variety of high school options and programs (e.g. charter schools, magnet schools, etc.) and choose one that suits your interests and academic needs and that will prepare you for your college and career goals.

In High School...
- Let your teachers and counselors know about your plans to go to college.
- Take the PSAT exam in 9th, 10th, and especially 11th grade to qualify for merit scholarships.
- Visit your school’s career and college counselors frequently.
- Seek academic support and tutoring to help you maintain a 3.0 GPA or better.
- Get involved in extracurricular activities at school or in the community.
- Pass your A-G classes with a C or better. Repeat an A-G class if you received lower than a C.
- If eligible, take community college classes.

In 11th grade...
- During the spring semester of 11th grade, register to take the SAT and ACT exams.
- Create a list of exam, application, and financial aid deadlines that you’ll need to meet your senior year.
- Visit college campuses.
- Make a list of colleges and scholarships that interest you; practice your applications and personal essays.

In 12th grade...
- Submit your college applications during the fall semester. Have a college representative review them before you submit, and make sure to follow all instructions.
- Apply for financial aid by March 2nd of senior year. Don’t miss deadlines!
- Be patient. Colleges will notify you of their acceptance decisions in late spring.
- Select a college that fits your interests and academic needs.

Congratulations, you made it!
Grade Point Average Matters!
Students must earn a C or better for college credit in their A-G classes during high school. When determining admissions, colleges consider grades as one of the most important factors.

A-G Classes Matter!
A-G classes are the high school classes you must pass to be accepted to California’s four-year colleges, including the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) systems. Students can begin taking A-G classes as early as middle school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A History/Social Science</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B English</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Math: Algebra 1,</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometry and Algebra 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Science with Lab,</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year physical science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year biological science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Language other than English</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must be the same language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Visual/Performing Arts</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G College Prep Electives</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exams Matter!
Colleges require students to take entrance exams like the SAT and ACT. To prepare for these exams, enroll in a variety of challenging academic classes, read a wide selection of authors and themes, and use available exam study materials. Contact your counselor to explore how to pay for exam fees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Exam</th>
<th>When should I take the exam?</th>
<th>Which colleges will accept my scores?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSAT Exam (Recommended)</td>
<td>In October of… 8th – 11th grade</td>
<td>California State University (Scores are not reported to colleges)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT Reasoning Exam or ACT Exam (Required)</td>
<td>11th grade (Spring semester) 12th grade (Fall semester)</td>
<td>University of California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT Subject Exam*</td>
<td>End of year in which the class is taken</td>
<td>California State University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Check with college for required subjects.
WHAT IS FINANCIAL AID?

Financial aid helps students and their families pay for college. It may be in the form of:

• **Grants:** Aid from the state or federal government that does not have to be repaid (unless, for example, you withdraw from school).

• **Scholarships:** Aid from a university or private organization that does not have to be repaid.

• **Work-Study:** A federal program that allows students to work a part-time job (on-campus or off-campus) to earn money for college.

• **Loans:** Borrowed money that must be repaid. Student loans have low interest rates and are paid back beginning 6 months after college graduation. Parent loans, with slightly higher interest rates, must be paid while students are in school.

IMPORTANT FINANCIAL AID APPLICATIONS AND FORMS

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): Fill out the FAFSA to receive federal and state financial aid. The application provides critical information about your ability to pay for college (called your Estimated Family Contribution), which determines how much and what types of financial aid you are eligible to receive.

GPA Verification Form: Complete this form to qualify for California grants.

Scholarships: Many private organizations and colleges offer merit-based or need-based aid to students. Research scholarship opportunities through your high school’s college office and the internet, and start applying as soon as possible.

CSS Profile: Some independent colleges encourage students to file this form to receive additional financial support. Deadlines vary by college.

HOW DO I GET FINANCIAL AID?

The financial aid application process occurs during the spring semester of 12th grade year. The priority filing period (the best time to apply to ensure you will receive financial aid) is between January 1 and March 2 each year.

1. Apply early for financial aid.
2. Invest in the future by starting a savings plan early.
3. Ask for financial advice from a professional at a bank or other financial institution.
4. Students should apply for scholarships early.

FINANCIAL AID RESOURCES

- Scholarshare College Savings Plan
  www.scholarshare.com
- California Student Aid Commission
  www.csac.ca.gov
- Federal Student Aid Commission
  www.fafsa.ed.gov
- US Department of Education
  www.ed.gov/studentaid
- Fast Web
  www.fastweb.com
- Latino College Dollars
  www.latinocollegedollars.org
- College Board
  www.collegeboard.com
- Save Me a Spot in College
  www.collegecampaign.org
- I Can Afford College
  www.icanaffordcollege.com
- Futuros (AB540 Information)
  www.futuros-california.org
- MALDEF (AB540 Information)
  www.maldef.org
- Scholarships.com
  www.scholarships.com
- Hispanic Scholarship Fund
  www.hsf.net
- United Negro College Fund
  www.uncf.org
- Thurgood Marshall College Fund
  www.thurgoodmarshallfund.org/scholarships奖学金.htm

AB540

California legislation (AB540) allows qualified students to pay in-state tuition regardless of family residency. To qualify, a student must:

• Have attended a California high school for 3 or more years,

• Graduate from a California high school (or earn a GED equivalent), and

• Submit a written promise — or affidavit — to obtain legal permanent residency when eligible.
# Exploring Careers: Students’ Role

1. Take a career or personality assessment to find out what occupations match your interests.
2. Explore your career interests by participating in activities and workshops.
3. Learn about the education level required for careers that interest you.
4. Learn about the different college majors connected to your career of interest.

## California Higher Education Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Available Degrees</th>
<th>Financial Aid Opportunities</th>
<th>Two-year College (Associate’s Degree)</th>
<th>Four-year College (Bachelor’s Degree)</th>
<th>Over Four Years of College (Graduate Degree Req.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Colleges (CC)</td>
<td>Two-year programs (Associate’s Degree (AA/AS) Certificate/Vocational Programs)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Administrative assistant</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>Architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California State University (CSU System)</td>
<td>4-year programs &amp; Graduate Programs* Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Masters Degree* (MA/MS)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Automotive mechanic</td>
<td>Computer systems analyst</td>
<td>Biologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California (UC)</td>
<td>4-year programs Graduate Programs* Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Master’s Degree (MA/MS)* Doctorate Programs (PhD)* Professional Programs* (e.g. medical, dental &amp; law school)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Cardiovascular technician</td>
<td>Dentitian</td>
<td>Chiropractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent/Private Colleges</td>
<td>2-year programs Associate’s Degrees (AA) Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Masters Degree* (MA/MS)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Heating, air-conditioning, and refrigeration technician</td>
<td>Diplomat</td>
<td>Dentist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-year programs Graduate Programs* Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Master’s Degree (MA/MS)* Doctorate Programs (PhD)* Professional Programs* (e.g. medical, dental &amp; law school)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Dental Hygienist</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-year programs Associate’s Degree (AA) Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Masters Degree (MA/MS)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Drafter</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Economist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-year programs Graduate Programs* Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Master’s Degree (MA/MS)* Doctorate Programs (PhD)* Professional Programs* (e.g. medical, dental &amp; law school)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Engineering technician</td>
<td>FBI agent</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-year programs Associate’s Degree (AA) Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Masters Degree (MA/MS)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Funeral director</td>
<td>Graphic designer</td>
<td>Management Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-year programs Graduate Programs* Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Master’s Degree (MA/MS)* Doctorate Programs (PhD)* Professional Programs* (e.g. medical, dental &amp; law school)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Hotel/restaurant manager</td>
<td>Insurance agent</td>
<td>Paleontologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-year programs Associate’s Degree (AA) Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Masters Degree (MA/MS)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Medical laboratory technician</td>
<td>Investment banker</td>
<td>Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-year programs Graduate Programs* Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Master’s Degree (MA/MS)* Doctorate Programs (PhD)* Professional Programs* (e.g. medical, dental &amp; law school)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Medical record technician</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-year programs Associate’s Degree (AA) Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Masters Degree (MA/MS)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN)</td>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
<td>Rabbi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-year programs Graduate Programs* Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Master’s Degree (MA/MS)* Doctorate Programs (PhD)* Professional Programs* (e.g. medical, dental &amp; law school)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Medical laboratory technician</td>
<td>Pharmacist</td>
<td>Scientist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-year programs Associate’s Degree (AA) Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Masters Degree (MA/MS)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Medical record technician</td>
<td>Public relations specialist</td>
<td>Sociologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-year programs Graduate Programs* Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Master’s Degree (MA/MS)* Doctorate Programs (PhD)* Professional Programs* (e.g. medical, dental &amp; law school)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Medical laboratory technician</td>
<td>Recreational therapist</td>
<td>University Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-year programs Associate’s Degree (AA) Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Masters Degree (MA/MS)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Medical record technician</td>
<td>Research assistant</td>
<td>Veterinarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-year programs Graduate Programs* Bachelor’s Degree (BA/BS) Master’s Degree (MA/MS)* Doctorate Programs (PhD)* Professional Programs* (e.g. medical, dental &amp; law school)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Medical record technician</td>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>Zoologist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Bachelor’s degree recommended
Established in 2000 by the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP), *Families In Schools (FIS)* supports the engagement of parents and communities in their children’s education to achieve lifelong success. FIS’s College Awareness and Preparation programs promote early college planning and are designed to strengthen college outcomes for children and youth throughout the educational pipeline. The *Going on to College (GOT College!)* program is customized to engage elementary, middle, and high school students and their parents in setting goals and planning for college as a team. In addition, the programs also support schools in planning family-friendly and college-oriented events, including college field trips, conferences, and workshops to promote a college-going culture at home and at school.

**GUIDING QUESTIONS:** Parents and students should work together to create a plan to help reach the child’s educational and career goals. To get started, here are a few questions to help students and their families stay on track as early as middle school.

### Middle School
- What high school will best help me reach my college and career goals?
- What can I do to succeed in Algebra 1?
- What activities are important and interesting to me?
- Where can I find tutoring and other academic support?

### High School
- What classes do I need to graduate?
- What classes must I take to prepare for college?
- What clubs or activities will I participate in?
- What college(s) will I prepare for?
- What other requirements must I fulfill?
- Where can I find help during the college and financial aid process?

### College/Career
- What is my career goal?
- What educational level is required for that career?
- What are the college majors that relate to my career?
- Will I live at home, in a dorm, or on my own?
- Do I want to study in a foreign country during my college experience?

### Middle School
- How can I best support my child during the transition to middle school?
- Where can I find support for my child’s academic needs?

### High School
- How can I support my child during the transition to high school?
- Where can I find support to help my child achieve his/her academic goals?
- Where can I learn about college and career options for my child?

### College/Career
- How can I help my child explore a variety of career options?
- What kind of support does my child need?
- How can the entire family support my child’s goals for college and careers?