

ACTION INFORMATION SHEET

A Challenging High School Education for All

High school is preparation for college, vocational or technical training, and work. By helping your child explore options and set goals for life after high school, you can play a key role in shaping a bright future for your son or daughter. Communicate your expectations that he or she will succeed.

Foundations for Success

Your child's first steps toward success are to take high school courses that support his or her postsecondary goal. Extra-curricular activities play an important role as well.

- **College:** If college is the target, a strong schedule of classes – such as English, math (algebra I and II, geometry, trigonometry, calculus), foreign language, science (biology, chemistry, physics), and history or social studies – should help your child be prepared.
- **Vocational or Technical Training:** This path may require another set of classes. The school guidance counselor or teachers can help your child determine which classes will be most helpful in reaching his or her goal.
- **Extra-curricular Activities:** In addition, high school activities such as school clubs, internships, community service, and sports can build skills needed on the job. These skills include responsibility, time management, and leadership.

Stay involved as your child progresses through high school. While it is likely that your child will want some independence, remain aware of your child's studies and after-school activities.

Focus Now on Future Success

Having a goal of postsecondary education helps students focus on success in high school and in life. Today, most good jobs require applicants to have education beyond high

school. College graduates earn about 43 percent more than high school graduates. At the end of 2005, those with at least a bachelor's degree had a median weekly income of \$1,029, while those with a high school diploma earned about \$585 a week.¹

Many academic choices are available to help high school students prepare for postsecondary education:

- Charter schools or magnet schools, which focus on themes such as technology, science, or the arts, may help encourage your child's talents and interests.
- Advanced placement courses may be offered in your high school. These might allow your child to skip some beginning-level classes in college and, perhaps, graduate early.
- Minnesota's Postsecondary Enrollment Option (PSEO) allows students to find academic challenges by taking college courses and earning college credits while they are still in high school through. Your child's guidance counselor can provide you with more information on the PSEO program. You can also visit http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Academic_Excellence/School_Choice/Post_Secondary_Enrollment_Options_PSEO/index.html to learn more about this program.

You may also want to look for programs that support college success. Some, for example, teach study skills and provide tutoring. Others help students apply to college.

Partner with Teachers and Counselors

Teachers and counselors can help you resolve any day-to-day issues your child has in school. They also can be important allies as you plan for your child's postsecondary education. The counselor usually handles class registration and schedules.

You build partnership when you:

- Tell the counselor about any problems at home that may affect your child's school performance, such as divorce or illness.

- Attend school open houses or parent nights to meet your child’s teachers; you also may request individual parent-teacher conferences if needed. Ask the principal or parent coordinator for a translator if you need one.
- Use a computer to monitor your child’s report cards and grades if you have access to the internet. Many teachers will give you their e-mail addresses so you may contact them easily if you have to e-mail; they can also provide you with a phone number. They may also have their own Web sites where they post class notes and assignments. Request paper copies if you do not have access to the internet.
- Ask teachers and counselors for services within the school or the names of tutors if your child needs extra help; such tutoring may be free.
- Obtain checklists for applying to college and for financial aid from counselors and the guidance office. The school can tell you when college entrance exams, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT), are given. Most colleges require one of these tests for admission consideration. The school or your local library may have guides to help your child prepare for these tests. The U.S. Department of Education has helpful information about college financial aid options and resources. Visit <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/parents.jsp> to learn more.

Keep Your Child Safe

Safety at school can be a concern for some students. By being involved in your child’s school and knowing your child’s friends, you can help make the high school years safer.

Physical Safety

- Teach your child how to recognize—and avoid—potential risks.
- Discuss the dangers of chemical substances and abuse.
- Remind your child to keep his or her belongings locked up and to leave valuables at home. Theft is the most common school crime.

In the most recent government report, 29 percent of students in grades 9-12 reported that they had been offered drugs at school, 13 percent had been in a fight on school property, and 9 percent had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property.² Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), a student may transfer out of a school that the state

deems persistently dangerous. NCLB also says that if a student is the victim of a violent crime at school, he or she may attend another public school in the same school district.

Emotional Safety

You can help your child be safe during the high school years by paying attention to his or her behavior and friends.

- Be aware if your child’s grades drop or if your child is sad or angry. Counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and others trained in solving these types of problems can be helpful.
- Look to the school’s parent-teacher organization and the school newsletter to provide information on safety and other topics as well.
- Talk with your child about any concerns you may have; let your child know you are willing to listen, too.

Find More Ideas at the Minnesota Parent Center

The Minnesota Parent Center helps parents be strong partners in their child’s education. It also encourages community involvement to help all children be prepared for school and to succeed when they arrive there. The center’s multicultural staff can answer questions about early childhood learning and school-related problems for all children. It also provides helpful written materials and offers workshops on topics such as the No Child Left Behind Act, parental involvement, and more. All services are free.

Call 952-838-9000 or 800-537-2237 (toll free in Greater Minnesota) to see how you can help your child do well in school. You also can learn more online at www.PACER.org/mpc.

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PACER is a statewide nonprofit organization. It supports the educational rights of children with and without disabilities. It offers workshops, individual assistance, written information, and more.

¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Usual Weekly Earnings of Wage and Salary Workers: Fourth Quarter 2005,” USDL 06-98, Jan. 19, 2006.

² U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2005. Washington, D.C.