

**Parent Guide to College:  
Help Plan Your Child's Education**

## INTRODUCTION

### A Mini-Course for Parents

Would you like to help your child succeed in high school and go to college? Of course you would. That's why Take Stock in Children has designed this **Parent Guide to College**—to give parents of Take Stock in Children scholars information and tools they can use to prepare their children for college. **This Parent Guide is a mini-course full of practical tips, activities, and ideas that will make your child's educational planning and preparation much easier and more productive.**

If you read each section of this course and use the information, you will greatly increase the chances that your child will do better in school and stay on track for college. Many of these things are so simple and obvious that parents often overlook them. Remember, however, that the little things you do everyday can sometimes make a big difference in your child's life! **Helping prepare your child can also be a great way to strengthen your relationship and show him how much you care about his future.**

### What The Course Can Do

**Become Your Child's Advocate.** You might think that you will have to learn how to tutor your child to help him with school, but this is not the case. **In fact, your main job is not to help your child understand the subject matter of courses, but to make sure that experts—teachers, counselors, tutors—are addressing your child's needs.** As a parent, the first thing to realize is: you don't have to go it alone. Preparing a child for college is long-term activity that requires the assistance of many people. This course will show you how to be your child's advocate. Being an "advocate" means *helping others help your child*. **This course will show you how to be an effective advocate for your child.**

**Raise Expectations.** The first thing you have to do is to remember that your child is special and that he is capable of improving: if he believes he can. Your task is to make sure he does believe in himself. Children most often perform at the level that everyone expects them to. If they believe they are "average," they will perform at that level. They will also begin to lose faith in their ability to improve. "I just don't do well in school." If you believe your child is special, your child will begin to act out this belief. You are a role model for your child. You can be a role model for your child by treating his education as the most important thing in the world! **This course will show you how to be a role model to raise the expectations of your child to new heights.**

**Coaching Your Child.** Do you know how many championships Michael Jordan won before Phil Jackson was his coach? How many did Shaq win? Or Kobe? The answer is: none. Could Phil Jackson win without such talent? No. The point is that talent needs to be coached to bring out its full potential. Coaches players' skills and potential, give them winning strategies, and motivate them in all sorts of ways. **This course will teach you how to be an academic coach for your child.**

**Learning How to Learn.** An athletic coach is one who helps build players' physical skills; an academic coach helps build academic skills. Did you know that parents can help their children learn how to learn? This is one area that schools often take for granted: the development of good study habits and skills. *The problem is that, without these habits and skills, students are not likely to perform well, no matter how gifted they may be.* **This course will show you how to teach your child the basic study and academic skills so that he can get the most out of his potential.**

## Coaching Can Make All the Difference

**Learning Ability Requires Skill, Coaching, and Support: The Connie Hawkins Story.** What is your child's learning potential? Before you answer, think about the story of Connie Hawkins. Connie Hawkins was a great basketball player from Brooklyn, but his family was very poor. He went to public school, where teachers simply passed him because he was a great basketball player. They never challenged him or pushed him to work on his basic academic skills. Connie never did well in school because he had no one to help him "learn how to learn," that is, learn basic skills like studying, reading or writing. In high school, his IQ was tested at 68. Teachers therefore thought he was not intelligent enough to do college work, but colleges wanted him to play for them; so, he was given a college scholarship.

In the summer of his senior year, Connie went to summer school at a college and, for the first time, received assistance with his reading. At the end of the summer, he took another IQ test and scored 114. **The moral of the story is that Connie's poor performance in high school was the result of his poor reading skill, not his intelligence.** When his reading skill improved, his "intelligence" also increased.

**Improving Basic Skills Can Improve Your Child's Performance.** What's the lesson of this story? *Your child has unlimited potential. There is no limit to what he can do, once he develops certain academic skills.* The plain fact is that most children do not have a "skills coach" to help them. Tutors can work with your child to improve his skills, but there are many things you can do to help. This course will show you easy ways to help your child take good notes in class, create effective study outlines, and read more productively. **This course will give you the coaching tools you need to develop your child's academic skills.**

## About the Course

**Organization of the Course.** This course has three sections. The first section shows you how to help your child develop good study habits and skills. The second section will assist you and your child in planning for high school. The third section deals with planning and preparing for college. It is important that you don't overlook a section. You may want to focus exclusively on planning for college, but if your child doesn't do well in school, he may not graduate from high school or be eligible for college! *Your child's academic performance should always be your first priority!*

**How to Use the Course.** This course has been designed for parents with children in the 6<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> grades. It includes material that will help them prepare their children, not just to attend, but also to succeed in college. The course is not difficult to use. Each section not only contains valuable information and practical tools that you can download and use to help your child. Each section includes many links to resources on the Internet that you can look at for even more information. Last, but not least, there are also tips on how to partner with your child to work together. This can be all-important. *Your guidance, encouragement, and support are the ultimate keys to your child's success.* Every child has unique talents and gifts, but they have to be unlocked. *Your enthusiasm and persistence are the keys to unlocking your child's potential.* This course will show you how to do it.

**Getting Started.** The first section of the course deals with academic performance—getting good grades in school. To learn the secrets of coaching your child in school, go to **HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH SCHOOL** and get started.

## Section 1: HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH SCHOOL

**I. How to Stay on Track in School.** The first step in helping your child with school is **to understand how he is performing**. To do this, you will have to get involved with your child's school. **This means communicating regularly with your child's teachers and counselors.** Here's a step-by-step plan to get as much information as possible about your child's performance and needs:

- 1) **Carefully Read Progress and Grade Reports.** Progress reports often contain very important information about your child's performance and, even more important, the reasons for the performance. Make sure you read over all this information carefully, for it may be crucial for your child's success.
- 2) **Talk with Your Child.** You should discuss progress reports with your child for several reasons. First, this activity sends a message to him that his performance is important and that you care about it. Second, these talks allow you to ask your child about ways to help. Third, you can use this opportunity to let your child know that certain changes are needed. Fourth, talking about school performance gives your child the option of suggesting ways to improve. **Tip:** Don't let the conversation be one-sided. Let your child have a say in how to improve.
- 3) **Praise Performance.** If your child's reports are good, make sure you praise his accomplishments. You might want to set up a reward system to motivate him to keep up the good work. If your child receives good progress reports, you should feel proud and let him know it.
- 4) **Encourage Improvement.** If your child's reports are not so good, try to avoid turning these conversations into blame sessions. You want to stress that academic performance is important, but you don't want to put undue pressure on your child. Your goals here are to try to find solutions to any academic problems and to motivate your child to work harder.
- 5) **Try to Get to the Bottom of Problems.** To be able to help your child with a problem, you first have to know the source of the problem. Children will often not tell you the real reasons for problems in school. They may say they don't like the class, but they really mean that they don't like the students or the teacher. Make sure you follow up on questions to be certain that your child tells you the whole story. Reward your child for being honest. Many times, students are reluctant to admit that they just don't like studying certain topics. That's okay. The challenge then is to find a way to get them interested in that topic. **The point is that you can't deal with a problem until you know the nature and source of the problem. Getting your child to discuss problems with you makes dealing with them much easier.**
- 6) **Communicate with Teachers.** Once you have talked with your child, you will have a better understanding of his needs. The next step is to start communicating regularly with teachers. A teacher states on the progress report that your child is struggling in math. This is a message to you. What should be done? Who is going to do it? *It is your responsibility to contact the teacher and ask about the ways to correct the problem.*

- 7) **Separate Learning Needs from Behavior Problems.** By talking with teachers, you will be able to separate learning needs from behavior problems. Behavior problems are things like turning in homework late or not paying attention in class. These are problems that you can work on with your child. Learning problems may require assistance by the teacher or a tutor.
- 8) **Get Extra Help.** If your child has learning needs, he will need extra help. Does the school offer tutoring in that area? Ask the school's guidance department about sources of assistance. Ask your child's teachers and school administrators. *The point is to keep asking until you find help for your child.* As your child's advocate, you should not stop looking for help until you find it.
- 9) **The Parent-Teacher Conference. Attending Parent-Teacher Conferences is the single most important thing you can do to help your child with school.** The Parent-Teacher Conference is not just a good place to talk about your child's needs or problems. It is a way to get those problems addressed. *You should go to the conferences to make sure your child is receiving the help she needs.* These conferences are all about your child's future. If you have to take off work to attend, so be it. There's no excuse for missing these meetings!
- 10) **Missing the Conference Can Hurt Your Child.** Let's say you don't go to a parent-teacher conference. What will happen? First of all, you will send a negative signal to teachers and school personnel: "That's too bad; the parents just don't care about their child's education." Second, you will send a negative message to your child—that you really don't think that his progress is all that important. Most important of all, **you will not get current information about your child's progress, problems, or needs.**

## Getting the Most Out of a Parent-Teacher Conference

**Preparing for Your Conference.** The Parent-Teacher Conference is the best way to identify and address your child's academic needs because it brings teachers, counselors, and parents together at the same time to give more complete evaluations of your child's performance and the reasons for this performance. These meetings are a service to parents and children. As a parent, you should take advantage of them to get all the help you can for your child. The purpose of these meetings is to share information about your child's performance and suggest ways to improve it. **Your main objective is to get them to formulate a plan and create a team to address your child's particular needs and problems.** Teachers, counselors, and administrators are far more likely to go out of their way to help your child when they know that you are determined to help as well.

Here is some valuable information to help prepare for a Parent-Teacher Conference:

The average Parent-Teacher Conference lasts 30 minutes.

If there are teachers, parents, a student advocate, and counselors present, you may only a few minutes to ask questions.

Therefore you should prepare your questions prior to the meeting.

Make sure you have read over all progress reports and talked with your student.

**The key is to have a game plan before you attend your meeting.**

## **A Game Plan for Parent-Teacher Conferences**

**Your Goals as a Parent.** To prepare for your parent-teacher conference, first ask yourself: What are my goals? You should think about the three goals listed below before you formulate your game plan.

- 1) Identify the Nature and Extent of the Performance Problem (Is it a learning or behavioral problem?)
- 2) Determine Possible Solutions to the Problem
- 3) Assign Responsibility for Solving the Problems

### **1. Identify the Problem—Questions to Ask:**

- Is my child under-performing?
- Does he have a problem with conduct or attendance?
- Is he prepared for class?
- Does he do his homework?
- Does he have good study skills and habits?
- Does he pay attention in class?
- Is he motivated to learn?
- Have any changes occurred his attitude recently?

**Goals:** First of all, you want to identify any problems. Then, you should decide if they are learning or behavioral problems. **Remember, you can play a big part in helping with behavioral problems.**

### **2. Determine Solutions.**

- What resources can be used to address the causes of the problems?
- What is the student's attitude about accepting help?
- Will the student follow through?
- How will these resources help the student's performance?

**Goals:** Once the problems and their causes have been identified, everyone should agree about their solutions. How do we correct these problems and address these needs?

### **3. Assign Responsibilities.**

- What do I have to do as a parent?
- What will teachers do to help?
- What extra help can the school provide?
- When should we start doing these things?
- What is the best way to do them?

**Goal:** The objective here is to develop a plan and make sure that everyone agrees to help. You are attending the conference as an advocate for your child. This means that you want to leave the meeting with some type of plan or solution to whatever problems or issues have been raised. Too many times

parents leave conferences thinking that it is all up to them or their child to resolve these issues. Your job is make sure everyone is doing their part!

**Benefits of a Parent-Teacher Conference.** The Parent-Teacher Conference is your opportunity to get assistance for your child. It is therefore your obligation to attend. At this meeting you will have the chance to establish regular communication with your child's teachers. They will be your source of information for helping your child succeed academically. If you can establish a good working relationship with your child's teachers, you will be able to learn many concrete ways to improve his performance. Teachers will also be far more likely to help your child if they know you and how much you want your child to succeed.

**Conclusion: Become Your Child's Advocate.** An advocate is someone who makes sure that a child's needs are being met. You can be instrumental in helping your child with school by becoming his advocate. By communicating effectively with teachers and counselors, you can build a team and create a plan to ensure that your child gets all the help he needs to succeed in school. **By becoming an advocate, you can make certain your child is not overlooked.**

**Helping at Home.** There is also another way parents can help children with school that is just as important: changing their behaviors at home. You can go to **LEARNING BEGINS AT HOME** and find out about the simple things you can do at home to improve your child's study habits.

## **II. Learning Begins at Home**

**Success Begins at Home.** To be successful in school, students have to practice good study habits at home. Acquiring good work habits is a key to success in every field. Great athletes like Michael Jordan and Venus Williams make things look so easy, but we all know that they have trained and practiced all their lives to perform at such a high level. Every athlete and every prominent person will tell you that success is a habit that must be practiced day in and day out. You don't just walk onto the floor at game time and expect to succeed. You have to prepare for success at home as well. **Success in school requires the practice of good study habits at home.**

**Acquiring Good Study Habits.** This section will show you how to encourage your child to develop good study habits at home. Every young person naturally would rather have fun than work or study, but that's not the way to become successful. Hard work, self-discipline, and sacrifice are the keys to academic success; however, good study habits can make students more efficient and schoolwork easier. This means that they can get their studying done and still have free time to do what they want.

**Procrastination is the One Habit to Break.** The main habit parents need to break is their child's tendency to put off doing homework. Acquiring good study habits starts with this first principle: **Homework First**. Getting students into the habit of doing homework first and having fun later is the key to developing all the other good study habits.

**Homework Policy.** Having a set policy for doing homework is a great way for you to teach your child how to avoid the pitfalls of procrastination. This means that parents and siblings must also change their behaviors too. Here are some tips for creating a good **learning environment** in your home:

- 1) **Establish a Homework First Rule.** Your child should do homework when he feels most alert and energetic, usually right after school or right after supper. Don't let him put homework off until he is too tired to do his best. Work first and then play. This is a time-honored formula for success. "You can watch tv after you get your homework done." If you let your child wait until late in the evening to do homework, what will happen? First of all, he will probably be too tired to concentrate. Second, she may just put it off and not do it at all. If parents put children on notice that they have to do homework first and at a set time, they will get them into the habit of doing it.
- 2) **Set Aside a Quiet Time.** Students need quiet in order to concentrate on homework assignments and to study for tests. They always say they can study with earphones on or with the tv, but the plain fact is that they concentrate better without these distractions. It's a good idea to convince your child that he will get his work done quicker without music or tv.
- 3) **Honor Quiet Time.** Make sure everyone in the house respects your child's quiet time. This will send a powerful message—that this time is very

important and should be respected, even by the parents. You are honoring your child by placing his interests at the top of the list.

- 4) **Create a Study Area.** Let your child design and maintain a study area. This may be a room or just a desk. Help h organize it and keep it tidy. Having a set study area helps get students into the habit of studying. Letting children study all over the place makes it much easier for them to get distracted.
- 5) **Regulate the TV.** Young people often spend more time watching television than they do studying. Watching television is a good way to have fun, but it can be a habit that interferes with studying. You might want to have a rule in the house that the tv stays off until all homework is finished. Students have to realize early on that there must always be a balance of work and fun. If they know that parents or siblings are watching tv while they are working, they will have a harder time focusing on their homework because they will feel left out.
- 6) **Helping Your Child with Homework.** Helping your child with homework has many benefits for you and your child.

First of all, you will acquire firsthand knowledge of your child's progress if you monitor his homework on a daily basis.

Second, you will develop a closer relationship if you take the time to work on homework together.

Third, your presence can ensure that he completes assignments.

Fourth, he can ask questions and learn from you.

**The Benefits of a Homework Policy.** To make studying a habit, your child needs a set homework policy. Otherwise, you leave the time and place for doing homework up to him. This can lead to procrastination! Now, it may be difficult at first to enforce your homework policy, but it will be easier for all concerned over the long haul.

**How Much Time Should Homework Take?** There's really no formula to tell parents how long children should take to get their homework done, but below you will see a general estimation of the average number of minutes per day that students should spend on their homework assignments. Another way to get a better idea of the amount of time your child should devote to homework is to ask his teachers.

Grade Level	Approximate Homework Time (Minutes Per Day)
Kindergarten	15
Grades 1, 2, 3	30
Grades 4, 5, 6	45
Grades 7, 8	90
Grade 9	120
Grade 10	130
Grade 11	140
Grade 12	150

## Help Your Child Manage His Homework

**How To Get Organized.** Here are some practical things you can do to make it easier for your child to work on his homework:

### 1) Create a Regular Study Area

Create a comfortable study area with all the materials (dictionary, pens, papers, rulers) that your child will need to use for homework.

Make sure the area is quiet.

Find a comfortable chair (hard chairs make studying less enjoyable).

If your child has a study desk, keep it clean of toys and other things that might distract him.

### 2) List Activities in Order

Teach your child to prioritize homework: do the hard stuff first.

Don't let him use the old "I don't know where to start" as an excuse.

Do the easy stuff last.

### 3) Establish Your Study Time

Reserving a regular study time is all-important.

Students who work at the same time every day do their work everyday!!!!

Late night studying can be less productive because children have less energy.

Once your child agrees to a homework schedule, get him to stick to it by encouragement and by eliminating distractions.

When students see how important homework is to parents, they will gradually understand how important it is for them.

Children who only do homework when they "feel" like doing it will never get it done on schedule.

Get homework done ahead of time in order to prepare for tests.

Always stick to the "work first—play later" rule.

### 4) Help Only When Necessary

Encourage your child to divide the homework assignments into "What I can do myself" and "What I need help with."

This will help you to identify areas where your child needs assistance.

**You should help only with that part of the homework your child can't do independently.**

### 5) Write Down Instructions Carefully

Does your child write down homework instructions carefully and clearly? If she doesn't, how can you help him?

Does your child understand what the teacher wants?

Tell your child to ask the teacher for clarification if she doesn't understand the instructions.

**6) Celebrate Your Child's Achievements**

Successfully completing homework assignments for a week deserves some type of recognition or award.

Reward your child on weekends for achieving this goal.

Teach him to take pride in completing a week's worth of assignments.

**7) Plan the Week**

Students who can plan their homework schedule will find it much easier to keep on track.

Planning your homework a week in advance allows you time to enjoy special activities during the week.

USE THE HOMEWORK LOG!

**8) Monitor Homework Daily**

Look over your child's weekly planner to make sure she has written all assignments down.

Make sure that you both understand the deadlines for all homework assignments.

**9) Communicate Regularly with Teachers**

Don't be afraid to question teachers about homework.

By showing your concern, you are demonstrating to them that you care about what they do and that you want your child to succeed.

If you don't understand homework instructions, will your student?

**10) Look Over Homework When It is Completed**

Try to check homework after it is completed in order to make sure your child has followed directions properly.

Praise children when they have finished: "Good job!"

**11) Allow Study Breaks**

Have a "snack break" midway in the study period.

Use the break to ask how things are going and if help is needed.

**12) Use a Homework Log.** A Homework Log is a simple tool that you and your child can use to keep track of homework assignments. If you have a weekly calendar, you can also use it; put it up on the refrigerator. Here is a good log that you and your child can use:

Weekly Homework Assignments				
Record Assignments Due and Completed				
Name _____		Week of _____		
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Due:	Due:	Due:	Due:	Due:
Completed:	Completed:	Completed:	Completed:	Completed:

**Go the Extra Mile for Your Child.** By communicating regularly with your child’s teachers, by establishing a good learning environment in your home, and by helping your child with his homework, you will be able to keep track of as well as contribute to his progress in school. When you do these things, your child will notice your effort. He will see you working hard for him; this will motivate him to work hard for you.

**Coaching Your Child.** If you have doubts about the impact you can have as your child’s coach, just remember the story of Connie Hawkins. Many, many children are not

performing up to their potential in school simply because their basic skills are not fully developed. Learning for them is a constant struggle. The point is that every student needs to learn these skills, but who will teach them? Click here to learn all about **[BUILDING YOUR CHILD'S SKILLS](#)**

### **III. Build Your Child's Skills**

**Learning How to Learn.** Can you teach your child how to learn? Yes you can. Learning how to learn requires the development of a few basic skills: listening, note-taking, memory, reading, writing, and a few others. Schools do not always focus on these learning skills, but rather on what is to be learned. Too often teachers assume that students possess these basic skills, when in fact they do not. Lack of basic skills becomes a burden that increases over time, making high school very difficult and college nearly impossible for students to handle. **Students who lack basic study and learning skills cannot handle the increased workloads of high school or college.**

**Skills are Acquired Through Practice.** Enough bad news; the good news is that your child can learn these skills. The better news is that they are not that hard to acquire. The best news is that you can help them acquire these skills. Helping your child, however, requires a commitment on your part. This section contains some good study tools that will teach students how to develop these skills, but this improvement will take time and effort. It is your job to make sure your child sticks with it and keeps using them. Practice makes perfect. Skills are only improved through repetition and practice.

#### **Basic Study Skills**

1) **Taking Notes in Class.** The ability to take good notes in class is a critical skill, especially for college-bound students. There is a very easy way to teach your child how to take good notes. It is called the Cornell Method. All you have to do is give your child a copy of the page provided below and show him how to use it. Key ideas and terms are to be written in the left-hand column. In the larger right-hand column, definitions and descriptions of these terms can be written. In the bottom section, students can write down summaries or comments. That's it! Think about it. If you ask students to organize their notes on their own, what will be the result? The odds are their notes won't be very organized. If you give your child copies of the Cornell Method form, you will make it much simpler for them to organize their notes and their thoughts as well. Take a look at this tool and give it a try!

### Cornell Method

**Main Ideas**

**Definitions and Explanations**

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**What I Need to Remember:**

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- 2) **Outlines: The Best Study Guides.** Outlines are by far the best study guides because they enable students to logical organize their information, making it much easier to remember. Students can use the Cornell Method to create outlines for papers and for tests by transferring the main ideas and supporting information into the left- and right-hand sections of the outline. Encourage your child to create and use outlines as study guides.

### Basic Outline Form

The basic form of an outline has main ideas listed on the left side.

**Main Ideas**                      **Supporting Information**

- I.  
    A.  
        1.  
            a.  
                (1)  
                    (a)  
                    (b)  
                (2)  
            b.

### Example of a Traditional Outline

- I. Main Idea: Causes of the Great Depression  
    A. Type: Economic  
        1. Stock market speculation  
        2. Margin buying  
        3. Lack of regulation  
        4. No checks and balances  
    B. Type: Agricultural  
        1. Drought  
        2. Poor land management  
        3. Poor planning
- II. Main Idea: Effects of the Great Depression  
    A. Type: Economic  
    B. Type: Social  
        1. Starvation  
        2. Dislocation

The sub-headings and supporting data are intended to answer a number of questions:  
What?  
Who?  
How?  
How many?  
Where?  
When?  
What are the main causes?  
How many types?  
How did they operate?  
When did they occur?

- 3) **Help with Reading.** Did you know that there is a simple way to show children how to read a textbook? It is called the SQ3R Method. Actually, there's nothing to it. But the key is to practice it faithfully. It is so easy students often want to use shortcuts. That's when they run into trouble! Take a look at this method and see if your child can benefit from it. Get one of your child's textbooks and practice it with him.

**Step 1. Survey the Text**

1. Scan the table of contents
2. Read title and introduction to the first chapter
3. Read the conclusion, summary, and chapter questions
4. Skim the main headings, subheadings, and boldface type
5. Read the first and last sentences of each paragraph (topic and transition sentences)
6. Examine charts, diagrams, and pictures

**Step 2. Question: Reading as Searching the Chapter**

1. Convert each heading and subheading into a question
2. Identify the relationship between main ideas and supporting evidence
3. Recognize connecting functional words:  
**More of the same:** also, more, moreover, likewise, again, furthermore  
**Change of ideas:** but, although, yet, nevertheless, despite, in spite of, however  
**Conclusions:** so, thus, therefore, in summary, consequently, accordingly, in conclusion, hence  
**Unfamiliar terms :** look up in the glossary or dictionary

**Step 3. Recite: Reading as Discovering Answers**

1. After reading each section, look away and recite your question.
2. Write your answer in the right hand column of your notes.
3. Write down unfamiliar terms in the left column.
4. Write definitions of unfamiliar terms in the right column.
5. Write down key phrases from the section
6. Repeat the procedure for each section of the chapter

**Step 4. Review**

1. Re-skim the entire chapter
2. Take five minutes to re-read notes

- 4) **Writing Skills.** There are several easy ways to help your child improve his writing skills. You may find one or more of these methods useful:

- a) **Keep a Journal.** The key is to encourage him to write every day by giving him a journal or diary to express his personal thoughts and feelings. Young people who get into the habit of self-expression will improve their writing over time.

- b) **Read Out Loud.** The next step is to encourage your child to read his journal or homework out loud. This is a great way for him to recognize how to write clearly and correctly.
- c) **Write Letters.** You can also encourage your child to write letters to relatives and friends on a regular basis. “I have to write to Uncle John. Can you get me started? What should I say?”
- d) **Online Help.** There are many good online writing tools. Look at our Parent and Student Libraries to find them.

**A Special Topic: Mathematics.** Mathematics is often difficult for students. It becomes even more difficult when students fall behind in a class or don't develop basic mathematical skills to allow them to master more difficult mathematical functions. Students can use the Internet to help them with mathematical problems and skills. (Be sure to direct your child to the math section of the Student Library.) But it is very difficult for them to catch up in a math class if they fall too far behind. Perhaps the most important thing you can do for your child with regard to this subject is to make certain he is keeping up with assignments and developing the basic mathematical skills.

**Conclusion.** Students who need a great deal of help with their basic skills should get tutors or special help from their teachers, but you can work to improve your child's basic academic and study skills. The great thing about these tools and strategies is that students will improve their study and academic skills over time simply by using them regularly.

The next way you can help your child with school is to show him how to **prepare for tests**. In the next section, you will find a few simple strategies to **HELP YOUR CHILD WITH TESTS**.

#### **IV. Help Your Child with Tests**

**Break Down the Study Barriers.** Young people may not like to study for tests merely because they have not learned how to do so efficiently. **Studying for tests is hard for children if they don't know the right ways to do it.** But you can teach them the right ways and make studying much easier for them. Below you will find the correct ways to prepare for tests:

- 1) **How to Prepare for Tests.** Sit down with your child and go over the following questions with him. Discuss the unmarked actions and encourage him to try all or some of these activities.

**When preparing for a test, do you:**

- Concentrate on what you don't know.
- Ask questions.
- Ask your teacher for help, if necessary.
- Make a test schedule.
- Create a study outline.
- Know what will be covered.
- Anticipate the questions.

- 2) **How to Take a Test.** Try to get him to do all of the following activities.

**When taking a test, do you:**

- Get a good night's sleep before the test.
- Understand the test directions.
- Look over the entire test first.
- Make sure you know how much time is given.
- Know how much the questions count.
- Notice key words in directions.
- Do the easiest questions first and return to the unanswered ones.

- 3) **Handling Test Anxiety.** Many students regularly experience test anxiety and simply lose the ability to concentrate on the test questions. Test anxiety can become a habit that eventually lowers students' self-confidence. They may even begin to convince themselves that they will never do well on tests. "I just can't take tests!" A certain degree of test anxiety is normal and healthy, but too much anxiety can cause students to "blank out" or "freeze up" during a test. Does your child suffer from test anxiety?

**How Do You Know If Your Child Has Test Anxiety?** Sit down and talk with your child about taking tests. Ask him if she has any of the classic symptoms of test anxiety: "brain freeze," shortness of breath, inability to sleep the night before a test, headaches, or even nausea. If you think your child has test anxiety, you can do several things to help.

The first is to make sure she has prepared properly. Students often panic if they have not adequately prepared for a test.

You can also work with him to **improve his test-taking skills**.

The third thing is to **use specific techniques** to keep calm during the test.

The fourth is for a student to **change his attitude** toward tests by lessening his stress. Here is a list of ways for students to lower their stress levels:

Get a good night's sleep before the test

Eat a good breakfast the day of the test

Avoid arriving too early or late for the test

Avoid listening to others or discussing the exam with others while waiting to begin the test

Take deep breaths to relax

Replace negative with positive thoughts

Don't get bogged down by worrying about hard questions; move on and return to them later

To relieve physical tension, flex and relax muscles in the body

Read test directions carefully

Focus on test questions and don't worry about performance

#### **4) Develop a Positive Attitude: What to Do After the Test**

- 1) Reward yourself for studying, regardless of your test scores
- 2) Try not to compare yourself to others
- 3) Determine your own performance goals
- 4) Assess your performance after each test and think of ways to improve your preparation
- 5) Practice self-talk; write down negative thoughts and counter each one with a positive statement
- 6) Repeat positive statements and visualize success
- 7) Believe that hard work and the right techniques will pay off in improved performance

**5) Taking Tests.** Here are some tried-and-true strategies for taking tests. Look them over carefully and spend some time with your child talking about them. Try to get him to practice them when taking a test.

**a) How to Take Essay Tests:** Essay tests become more important in high school and college. Here are a few tips on how to take an essay test:

##### **1. Keep Track of Your Time**

If you have five questions to answer in 40 minutes, make certain you don't spend too much time on any one question.

##### **2. Read Through the Questions Once**

By familiarizing yourself with all the questions at the outset, you will have much more time to consider your answers.

**3. Identify the Directive Words**

Read the directions carefully and pinpoint the key terms. If a teacher wants you to describe, then do so; if she wants you to evaluate, then don't worry so much about description.

**4. Outline Your Answer First**

Whether teachers acknowledge it or not, they are greatly influenced by the coherence and structure of your answer. To list facts in random order makes it seem as if you do not have a clear grasp of the material. Try to organize your answers as well as you can.

**5. Take Time to Write an Introduction and Conclusion**

A good introduction and summary are very effective ways to present your answers. It gives your responses the appearance of being logical arguments.

**b) How to Take True-False Tests:** Students often get "tripped up" by true-false questions because they don't read the question carefully. The key to doing well in true/false tests is to read the questions very carefully. Read over these basic principles with your child.

**1) Look for any word in the question that could make it false.**

If you can falsify an answer by providing a counter-example, the answer is obviously false.

**2) There are generally more true than false answers on a test.**

**3) Look out for extreme modifiers that tend to make a question false: all, none, never, only, etc.**

Once again, try to think of a counter-example that falsifies the answer.

**4) Identify qualifiers that tend to make questions true: usually, frequently, often, probably, etc.**

**5) Questions that state a reason tend to be false.**

Words that justify a statement -- since, because, when -- tend to make the statement false because they introduce a reason that is incorrect.

**c) How to Take Multiple-Choice Tests:** Students need to learn how to take multiple-choice tests since it is a format often used on standardized tests. Here are a few things students should know. Review each one of these principles with your child and have him explain why it is true.

1. Read each question with the intention of answering the question without looking at the possible answers.
2. Use educated guessing.
3. Eliminate two alternatives quickly and then decide between the other two.
4. When numbers are in each alternative, choose the numbers that are in the middle range, not the extremes, when guessing.
5. Choose answers that are longer and more descriptive.

6. When two similar answers appear, one is likely correct.

**Conclusion.** This section contains a lot of good advice that you can share with your child. In a way, test-taking does require skill as well as knowledge. Helping your child practice taking tests naturally leads to improvement. In addition, improving his test-taking skills can help your child do better on standardized tests, get better grades, and thus have a better chance of getting into his college of choice.

The final way to help your child do better in school is perhaps the most important. Go to the next section and learn how to teach your child to **HELP YOUR CHILD GET ORGANIZED**

## V. Help Your Child Get Organized

**Organization is a Skill.** So far, you've learned how you can become a "skills coach" for your child. The last skill that you can teach is perhaps the most important, because it will support all his other skills; in addition, if your child doesn't develop it, he will simply not make the grade in college. The focus now is on organizational skills. There are a great many students who have the potential to go to college and have successful careers, but they never get the chance simply because they lack the ability to manage their time. They miss assignments and fail to prepare for tests. Their grades suffer and they fall behind. They eventually become discouraged and drop out. **Helping your child develop the organizational skills listed below will therefore avoid these difficulties.**

### Organizational Skills

**Time Management.** Good time management means two things: having a schedule to get things done and having the discipline to stick to the schedule. The first tool that you can use to help your child manage his time is a **Homework Log** (see Section Two for example). This tool makes it easy for you and your child to keep track of homework and make sure assignments are done on time. You can also use the information listed below to teach your child the basic principles of time management:

#### I) 10 Time Management Tips

**1. Make a "to do" list every day**

Use a **planner** to keep your daily lists together  
Put the most important things at the top of the list and do them first  
Check off the tasks as you complete them

**2. Use spare minutes wisely**

Identify all the spare time you have—riding the bus, waiting for dinner  
Plan to use this "downtime" to finish short, easy tasks  
Use downtime as a cushion to get ahead of schedule

**3. Know that it's okay to say "no"**

If your friends want to go out the night before the SAT, realize that it's okay to decline  
If you want to go to a party the night before a big test, ask yourself which is more important

**4. Get more bang for your buck**

Determine when you do your best work  
Schedule your homework accordingly  
Avoid studying late at night when you're tired

**5. Review your notes after each class**

Use downtime to review notes  
Use frequent reviews to avoid cramming  
Prepare for pop quizzes

**6. Nutrition and Sleep**

Eat a good breakfast

Eat the right foods  
Too little sleep can make work much harder

**7. Communicate your schedule to others**

Ask your parents to cooperate with your schedule  
Tell your friends not to call when you are working  
Turn off the television!

**8. Become a taskmaster**

Determine your work schedule first  
Allot times to each activity  
Schedule your recreational activities second  
Eliminate recreational activities that are not important to you

**9. Don't waste time agonizing**

Do the hard/unpleasant tasks first so you don't have to dread or worry about them all evening  
Try to train yourself not to like or dislike any specific task—just do them

**10. Keep things in perspective**

Set realistic daily goals  
Schedule breaks when you need them  
Adjust your schedule if it isn't working  
Stick to your schedule if it works for you

**II) How to Budget Your Time**

Help your child fill out this sheet and decide how best to budget his time.

**1. Deciding on how much time you need to study.**

On the following lines list your present courses, the grade you think you will achieve, and the number of hours you will need to study each week to earn that grade.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Grade I Want</b>	<b>Weekly Study Hours</b>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**2. Determine how much time you have to study.**

How much time do you spend doing the following?

Studying at school \_\_\_\_\_ Free time activities \_\_\_\_\_  
Studying at home \_\_\_\_\_ Family activities \_\_\_\_\_  
Total hours studying per week \_\_\_\_\_

Do I need more time to study? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Do I need to budget my time?**

Do I have a quiet place to study? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

What is the best time for me to study? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do I need to set up a schedule? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What are the main distractions that I can eliminate?**

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**III) Identify Your Time Wasters**

Here is a simple activity sheet designed to help your child recognize “time wasters.” Time wasters are those activities that can be eliminated in order to give students more time for important tasks, like homework or studying. You and your child can work on this exercise together.

**Time Wasters:  
Things I Don’t Need to Do Every Day**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**IV) Assess Your Child’s Needs**

You can use this simple worksheet to decide how to help your child. Have him fill out this simple questionnaire and check the statements that are true. This will give you a better idea about his study habits and skills.

1. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I never study more than an hour for tests.
2. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I only study the night before a test.
3. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      If I study too much, I can't have time for fun.
5. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I study with music or the television on.
6. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I don't have a quiet place to study.
7. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I can't sit and study for long periods of time.
8. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I often doodle or get distracted in class.
9. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I have trouble taking notes.
10. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I don't use class notes to study for tests.
11. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I never organize my class notes.
12. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I have trouble keeping up with my reading.
13. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I don't always get my homework done.
14. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I can't recognize the main ideas in a chapter.
15. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I would like to read faster.
16. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I have trouble writing papers.
17. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I don't know how to create an outline for a paper.
18. \_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_ NO      I will put off any assignment that seem difficult.

**Conclusion.** This sheet is an easy way to get started helping your child with school. As you read over all the ways to help your child with school, you can decide which ones best address your child's needs. If you use the information in this section, you should begin to see improvement in your child's academic performance. Remember one thing, though; success is improvement and improvement is success. No matter how small the improvement, it can be called a success. One other thing: always reward or acknowledge improvement. Tell your child how much you appreciate the work she is doing and how hard she is trying. Your encouragement will be just as valuable as all the tools combined!

**Planning for the Future.** There are two more parts of this course. They have to do with planning: **planning for high school** and **planning for college**. Planning is very important, but don't forget that, without performance, planning will be a waste of time. Your child has to do the work and pass the courses to go to college; so it is important to focus on the first part of this course before you worry about the two planning sections. Once you've looked the first part of the course over carefully, go to **PLANNING FOR HIGH SCHOOL** to learn some practical things you can do to help your child make the most of his four years of high school.

## Section II: PLANNING FOR HIGH SCHOOL

**1. Taking the Right Courses: The Importance of Planning.** The decisions that your child makes in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades will have a huge impact on his future. About two-thirds of 8<sup>th</sup> graders plan to finish college, but only one-third plan to take college prep courses in high school! Another one-fourth don't know what kind of classes they should take in high school. **Our students need to think ahead and plan to be in a position to go to college.**

Here's where you as a parent come in. You can make sure that your child is taking the right classes. But first you need to know what courses your child will need to graduate from high school. Next, you and your child will have to decide what courses are best to prepare him for college. Remember that you must work together with guidance counselors to stay on track.

The first way that you can help your child plan for high school is to make sure she is **taking the right courses to graduate from high school**. Below you will see a list of all the requirements for high school graduation in the state of Florida. Make sure that you and your child take a few minutes to look over these requirements. (Remember that these are minimum standards. Your child's school may have additional requirements. Ask a guidance counselor for more information.)

### I) Credits Required for High School Graduation

**Students Must Attain 24 Academic Credits.** The 24 credits shall be distributed as follows:

\_\_\_\_\_ **Language Arts—4 Credits.** English courses must include major concentrations in composition and literature.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Mathematics—3 Credits.** Algebra I or equivalent must be included.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Science—3 Credits.** Two of the science credits must include a laboratory component.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Social Studies—3 Credits.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Practical/Vocational/Performing Art—1 Credit.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Life Management Skills--.5 Credit.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Physical Education—1 Credit.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Electives—8.5 Credits.**

### II) General High School Graduation Eligibility Requirements

**Pass the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade FCAT.** Students must earn a passing score on the grade 10 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test to be eligible for graduation.

**Grade Point Average.** Students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade are required to have a minimum grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 grading scale for promotion to a higher grade, for extra-curricular eligibility, and for graduation from high school.

**Restriction on Elective Credits.** No student shall be granted credit toward high school graduation for enrollment in more than a total of nine elective credits in remedial programs.

No student shall be granted credit toward high school graduation for enrollment in more than one credit in exploratory vocational courses.

No student shall be granted credit toward high school graduation for enrollment in more than three credits in practical arts, family, and consumer classes.

No student shall be granted credit toward high school graduation for enrollment in any Level 1 course unless the student's assessment indicates that a more rigorous course of study would be inappropriate.

### **III) Advanced Placement Courses**

Advanced Placement courses are college-level courses offered to highly motivated high school students. Colleges will look closely at your child's performance in AP classes because they are direct evidence of his ability to do college work. If your child is starting or already in high school, she should speak to a guidance counselor about taking AP courses.

**Scheduling Courses.** You and your child can use this course planner to schedule courses for all four years of high school. The key thing here is to have a guidance counselor look it over and approve it. Here are a few questions to ask a guidance counselor:

- 1) What electives (courses a student is not required to take) do you recommend?
- 2) What Advanced Placement courses are available for students?
- 3) Does my child's schedule overload him during any semester?
- 4) Is he taking the right courses to prepare for college?
- 5) Will he be able to do well in Advanced Placement courses?

**High School Course Planner**

	Freshman Year		Sophomore Year	
	Fall Semester	Spring Semester	Fall Semester	Spring Semester
<b>English</b>				
Course Title				
<b>Mathematics</b>				
Course Title				
<b>History/Social Studies</b>				
Course Title				
<b>Science</b>				
Course Title				
<b>Art</b>				
Course Title				
<b>Language</b>				
Course Title				
<b>Electives</b>				

	<b>Junior Year</b>		<b>Senior Year</b>	
	Fall Semester	Spring Semester	Fall Semester	Spring Semester
<b>English</b>				
Course Title				
<b>Mathematics</b>				
Course Title				
<b>History/Social Studies</b>				
Course Title				
<b>Science</b>				
Course Title				
<b>Art</b>				
Course Title				
<b>Language</b>				
Course Title				
<b>Elective</b>				
Course Title				

**2. Preparing for Standardized Tests.** There are four standardized tests that students should know about: the FCAT, the SAT, and the ACT.

1) **FCAT.** Florida's Comprehensive Assessment Test is given to all students in Florida public schools between grades 3 and 10. The primary purpose of the test is to assess cognitive skills represented by the Sunshine State Standards in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. A secondary purpose is to compare the performance of Florida students to the performance of students across the nation. The FCAT is important because it measures student performance with reference to accepted, grade-specific standards. **Students must pass the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade FCAT to be eligible for graduation from high school.**

2) **The PSAT/NMSQT.** The Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is offered to all college-bound students. All sophomores and juniors planning to attend college are urged to take this test for the following reasons:

Any student who wants to be considered for a National Merit Scholarship, the National Hispanic Scholarship or the National Negro Achievement Scholarship must take the PSAT during their junior year.

Students receive feedback on strengths and weaknesses on skills necessary for college study.

Students can use this feedback to prepare for the SAT.

Students will become familiar with the directions and types of questions used in the SAT.

#### **When and How to Register**

Your child must sign up for the test at your high school; the test is administered by high schools, not through test centers. Online registration is **not** available. You can learn about test dates by checking the College Board web site listed above. Test dates are usually scheduled in the middle of October.

#### **Fees and Fee Waivers**

The fee for the 2001 PSAT/NMSQT is \$9.50. Schools sometimes charge an additional fee to cover administrative costs.

**The College Board makes fee waivers available to schools for juniors from low-income families.**

3) **SAT.** This Scholastic Aptitude Test is the most widely used college admission test. In addition to grades, colleges use SAT scores to select students for admission.

#### **How to Register**

You can register online using the College Board web site (credit card required) or you can register by mail.

To register by mail, you need to get the Registration Bulletin from your school counselor's office.

A registration form is included with the Bulletin.

For complete information about the SAT, visit the College Board website:

<http://www.collegeboard.com/>. Here you'll find current information about registering: test dates, sites, and application procedures.

- 4) **ACT.** The ACT Assessment is another national college admission test. To learn more about this test, visit the ACT website: <http://www.act.org/aap/>.

**3. What You Should Know About Standardized Tests.** Learning the basic study and test-taking skills, working hard in school, and practice are the three best ways to prepare for standardized tests. Students can also take advantage of any services offered by their schools. Standardized tests can be very important for your child for a number of reasons.

First, poor performance on the FCAT can keep him from graduating.

Second, good performance on the SAT or ACT can help to get him a merit scholarship and admittance to the school of his choice.

Finally, standardized tests can help students compare their progress with other students from around the state and the nation.

The last page in this section will give you some good tips you can share with your child about **GETTING THE MOST OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL**. High school is more than just course work and tests. There are other things, fun things, that can make high school enjoyable and rewarding for every student.

### **III. Getting the Most Out of High School**

**Developing a Positive Attitude Toward School.** Students who don't like to go to school, for any reason, will usually not like school work; likewise, they will probably not do well in school. On the other hand, students who do like to go to school, for whatever reason, will tend to have a more positive view of their education and their courses. **Your child's attitude toward school will play a major role in his academic performance and his future.** On this page you will learn a few practical things you can do as a parent to improve your child's attitude toward school. A positive attitude toward school will help your child get better grades, graduate from high school, and be prepared for college.

**A. Get Your Child Involved in School.** Middle schools and high schools offer students many opportunities to participate in fun activities during and after school. Sports, clubs, and other activities help children make friends and learn new things about the world and themselves. Studies have shown that these activities generally improve students' attitudes toward school and their performance as well. *You should encourage your child to get involved in extracurricular activities whenever possible.* Involvement in school activities can improve a student's general attitude toward education simply by the fact that he enjoys these activities.

**B. You Can Get Involved.** Parents who get involved with their children's school activities also play a major role in helping their children prepare for college. Children whose parents volunteer to help out at school, who take their children to school events, and who participate in parent-teacher conferences are more likely to look at school as a friendly place and have a positive attitude toward school work. How can parents get involved? Try to meet with the principal of your child's school and ask about upcoming school events. You can also talk with your child's teachers; offer to help out school-sponsored events. Most important of all, talk with your child regularly about school activities; your child is the best source of information about these activities.

**C. Setting Goals.** As we said, to get the most out of high school, students should look at school as a place where they can pursue their own particular interests through their classes and by means of extracurricular activities. Another way to get the most out of high school is to set goals. Take a look at the worksheet listed below. It can help you and your child set realistic goals for high school. Setting goals for high school is a great way to get your child focused on what she has to do to prepare for college.

This is a simple worksheet you can use with your child. Each week you can help your child choose specific goals to accomplish and things to work on. Your child can help you choose goals and tasks as well. Using this worksheet is a good way for young people to get in the habit of identifying and achieving short-term goals. It also gets them to focus more on school. Students who set goals will be more invested in school because they have chosen specific milestones they want to reach. Your child will also learn from your example because you will also be setting and achieving goals.

***Weekly Goal Sheet for Students and Parents***

<b>Student</b>	<b>Parent</b>
<u>Goals I Have Achieved This Week:</u>	<u>Goals I Have Achieved This Week:</u>
<u>Goals for Next Week:</u>	<u>Goals for Next Week:</u>
<u>Things I Need to Work On:</u>	<u>Things I Need to Work On:</u>

**D. Dealing with the Challenges of High School.** To get the most out of high school, your child will also have to deal with negative things that can affect his attitude and performance. You should be aware that high school students experience a great deal of stress during their four years. Each child finds ways to cope with stress; some are productive and positive; some are not. Stress is the emotional toll that unresolved problems or worries can inflict on a student. *You want your child to be able to deal with the challenges of high school and not let them be a source of stress.* Here are some things you can do to help your child handle the stress of high school;

- 1) **Encourage him to express his feelings.** Talking about feelings and problems is the first step in coping with them. Have regular family meetings to talk about things. Be supportive and open in these meetings. Make it the rule: no criticism of honest emotions!
- 2) **Help your child get organized.** Use the materials in this course to make sure your child is organized. Lack of organization can be very stressful for students. Poorly organized students lose homework and forget about tests. They misplace books and supplies. Every day is chaos. Helping your child stay focused and on track is one of the best gifts a parent can give to a student.
- 3) **Keep your child focused on goals.** Everyday problems are much easier to handle if students keep their academic and life goals in mind. When a problem occurs, point out to your child that “this too shall pass.” Help him deal with it and keep it in perspective.
- 4) **Eat right and sleep well.** Stress can be magnified when students don’t eat regular, balanced meals or get enough sleep. Try to eat meals at the same time every day. Help your child get at least 7-8 hours of sleep each night. Regular meal and sleeping times are also important. Young people feel better when they have a schedule that works for them.
- 5) **Teach your child to laugh at herself.** Teens take themselves very seriously. Their appearance is a constant concern. Try to get your child to lighten up and laugh about himself rather than compare himself with others. If we constantly compare ourselves with others, we will never be happy!
- 6) **Build your child’s self-esteem.** Think of ways to build your child’s self-confidence. The best way is by recognizing the good things they do and by means of encouragement. “You can do it.” Constantly repeat the message that your child is loved and valued.
- 7) **Reward effort.** Although you want to see improvement in performance, don’t focus on performance. Focus on effort. “You tried really hard. That’s all that counts.” The more children try, the better they will do in school.
- 8) **Tune out the negative.** High school is a time when teenagers will be bombarded by all sorts of messages, many of which are negative. Who is a child to believe? Teach your child to have the strength to believe in herself. Teach him to tune out the negative. Focus on the positives: church, school, sports, family, etc.
- 9) **Talk about family values.** As a parent, you want to share your values with your child. This is very important for a teenager because high school will test his values. Drugs, crime, and trouble all start with a first act. What can

prevent it? A child who believes in the values you have taught him. So, talk about these values. Celebrate your family and the values you believe in.

- 10) **Include your child.** Teenagers can get “lost” in high school. They will meet new people and do new things. Sometimes they drift away from the family and spend too much time away from home. Sometimes they lose the sense of who they are. Try to include teenagers in family functions. Don’t let them grow up too fast or lose the sense of who they are and where they’re going.

**E. Staying Out of Trouble.** High school can be a rough place. Many students fall in with the wrong crowd and get into trouble in high school. *This can happen to any student.* Drugs and crime are out there every day. Your child will be exposed to them. What can you do to help your child stay out of trouble? Working with him on the activities contained in this course will be a big help. But students will have to learn how to deal with peer pressure when parents are not around.

**F. Handling Negative Peer Pressure.** Although you’d like to, you can’t choose your child’s companions for him. She will have to learn how to choose his friends in high school. These choices will have an impact on his life. Choosing the right friends, making the right choices, and resisting negative peer pressure are the three things that can ensure that your child avoids trouble in high school.

**G. Choosing the Right Friends.** Your child’s values are important so take some extra time to help him accept the positive values that you have. All you can do here is ask your child certain questions. Lecturing and preaching won’t cut it. Your child will tune you out. “You never like any of my friends. You don’t even know them!” Avoid making negative judgments about your child’s friends. But, if you are concerned that your child’s friends may get him into trouble, you should talk about the importance of his goals and the bad things that can happen simply by hanging out with the wrong crowd.

**H. Peer Pressure.** By having regular meetings with your child, you may begin to learn about all the pressures she is feeling. Peer pressure can be one of them. Help your child identify the friends who have positive values and those that don’t. Teach him to say no to people. Strong self-esteem will help him say no and respect herself. Talk about your own experiences.

**I. Meet and Talk with Your Child.** None of the ideas, strategies, and tools in this course will be effective unless you are able to meet and talk with your child regularly. When you meet with your child, go into a room and close the door. This is a special time. Your child is the center of attention. Your child is special. Talk openly and honestly with him. All the great things available in this course are for him. Share them with him. How you talk to your child is just as important as what you talk about. When she realizes that all these planning tools are gifts from you to him, she will not only appreciate them, but appreciate your love and concern as well. *Using the material in this course is your gift to your child.*

The last section of the course is about **planning and preparing for college**. It will give you all the information you'll need to help your child make the right decisions about college. Go to **[PLANNING FOR COLLEGE](#)**

### Section 3: PLANNING FOR COLLEGE

**Planning for College is All-Important.** The best way to prepare for college is to follow a good plan. Planning for college is crucial for your child because there are certain things that he must do at certain times in order to be eligible for college:

- 1) Take the Right Courses
- 2) Register for the SAT
- 3) Take the SAT
- 4) Apply for federal financial aid
- 5) Apply to colleges

**I. Planning Starts with a Calendar.** The best way to start planning for college with your child is to look at college prep calendar. The calendar we've included here will give you valuable information so that you and your child can prepare for college by knowing what to do and when to do it. **It is very important that you and your child use all the material available to you on our website: Parent and Student Libraries, the Student Resource Center, and the Parent Guides.** These resources have been designed to help you with all the tasks listed on this calendar.

#### College Preparation Calendar

##### Middle School

- Take challenging courses in English, math, science, history, geography, the arts, and a foreign language
- Develop strong study skills
- Choose the high school classes that best prepare you for college
- Explore careers with your mentor
- Talk with your guidance counselor about career interest surveys
- Use the Career Exploration tools in the Student Library to find careers that are of interest to you [**Use the Career Cruiser to explore careers**]
- Decide which extracurricular activities you want to pursue in high school

##### 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Complete a four-year course schedule [**Use Course Planner in the Student Resource Center**]
- Have your counselor review it
- Make sure that you are taking college prep courses
- Talk with your counselor about college and careers
- Ask counselor for information about standardized tests—especially the deadlines for registering!
- Attend College Night at your school
- Focus on getting good grades—your grades count from here on!
- Join a club or participate in extracurricular activity

## 10<sup>th</sup> Grade

Use Florida eChoices to explore career paths [**Look at the Student Resource Center and Student Library for more information about Florida eChoices**]

Get to know as many teachers as possible

Take the PSAT/NMSQT. You must register early. Ask about fee waivers.

Make two campus visits

Use the Student Library to make online campus visits

Start searching for scholarships online

## 11<sup>th</sup> Grade

Discuss possible choices of college major with your counselor

Create a short list of colleges

Talk to financial aid administrators and college admissions offices about scholarship and application deadlines

Talk to your counselor about local scholarships

Look for information about scholarships based on your ethnic background and/or career field

Register for and take the SAT, the ACT, or other exams required by the colleges you wish to attend

Start a scholarship file

Identify teachers who will write letters of recommendations for you

Narrow down your list of colleges

Request college applications from these colleges

## 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

Apply for scholarships

Meet with your counselor in September to discuss your college plans

Apply to colleges

Contact college financial aid administrators to get scholarship timelines

Gather information needed for the FAFSA [**Use *FAFSA on the Web*—see the Student Library for more information**]

Submit FAFSA the first week in January

Get your medical records (Health/Shot Records)—you will need them when you enroll

Apply to colleges early—deadlines for most college applications are in January or February

Apply for scholarships

Choose the best financial aid package

Notify college that you accept the offer

**II. Choose a Career Path.** Students should think about their career paths in high school because this will help them identify college majors that they may choose. A college major is a specialized field of study. By declaring a major, the student agrees to take particular courses to earn a degree in that field. Students should pick majors that interest them, but also prepare them for a career!

*Choosing a college major is very important.* It means that a student knows what she wants to do in life and the education necessary to do it. Unfortunately, many students choose a college major without much information about themselves or the world of work. Most people spend more time researching cars than careers! **Be sure that your child looks at our career development materials in the Student Resource Center to help him pick career paths that interest him.**

**A. Flexibility is Good.** There are two things to think about when choosing a major. Is the major the right one for your child's career? Is the career the right one for your child? The good news is that students today don't have to get locked into one career—they will have to be flexible enough to have several careers! Flexibility is an important thing to think about when considering a major. Business majors, for example, can do a lot of things. The same goes for computer science. In choosing a major, it is a good idea to know all the different types of career fields that this choice makes possible. The more options, the better. The danger is to choose a major that limits career options and lessens the chances of employment!

**B. How Be Flexible in Choosing.** Your child's choice of a college major should be consistent with his career choice. He can use the career interest surveys in our career course or visit the career resource center at the high school or at a local college to help find majors that match his choice of a career.

**C. When to Do It.** Students don't have to commit to a college major until they enroll in college and may even defer the choice until the end of the sophomore year; however, they should have a clear idea of their career field during their senior year in high school. By using proper career development resources [look at the [Parent Guide to Careers](#) for more information about identifying career interests], your child, hopefully, will be able to choose the right major before enrolling in college. *If your child doesn't have a clue about his college major, don't worry. Use the career tools in our career course and help him focus on his career interests first.*

**III. Visit a Campus.** Here's an easy and fun way to prepare for college: take your daughter or son to a college campus. You can visit campuses on the Internet by using our [Parent Library](#)! Younger students will like to look around and see the sights. Just let them have fun and answer any questions they might have. It will get their attention and give them something to look forward to. Juniors and seniors should have an agenda; they need to start asking specific questions and getting specific answers to help them prepare for college. Here are some things that juniors and seniors can do on their campus visits.

**A. Contact the College Admissions Officer**

College admissions personnel can provide current information on all the major questions you may have about: admission requirements, financial aid, tutors and other student resources, and important deadlines.

## **2. Contact Friends or Student Representatives at the School**

These informal contacts can answer more practical questions:

- 1) Are the dorms quiet?
- 2) Where are the best places to study?
- 3) Is there too much partying here?
- 4) Are faculty accessible or aloof?
- 5) Why did you pick this school?
- 6) Does it meet your expectations?

## **3. Try to Verify Costs**

- 1) How much do food, tuition, and other items really cost?
- 2) Gather as much information about expenses as possible from college officials.

## **4. Check to see if the college has a career development service.**

- 1) How much will your school do to advance your career after college?
- 2) Students need to ask for evidence that the college will help them enter a career.

## **5. How will this school help me achieve my goals?**

**IV. Consider Community College.** Many students do not have a choice when it comes to going to college. They have to go to a school they can afford or one that will accept them. But if you and your child use the tools in our financial aid course, you will discover that you have choices to make. And that's a good thing! Many Take Stock in Children students will choose a community college. There are a lot of advantages to going to a community college. Here are some that you can share with your child:

- 1. Individual Instruction.** Community colleges generally have good faculty/student ratios. Smaller class sizes mean more personalized instruction—students have more opportunities to ask questions, get to know instructors, and receive special help.
- 2. Cost-Efficiency.** Students who attend a community college generally can live at home; this can save them a great deal of money.
- 3. Personal Development.** A community college provides many opportunities for students to develop leadership abilities as well as scholastic and social capabilities in a more relaxed, less competitive environment.
- 4. Flexible Schedules.** Most community colleges offer courses at various times to accommodate students' work schedules.
- 5. Transfer Capability.** Community colleges offer university parallel courses that readily transfer to a senior college or university.
- 6. Guidance.** Community colleges also have guidance personnel who are trained to address non-traditional students' needs and problems.
- 7. Special Assistance.** Community colleges provide many special services for non-traditional students.

- 8. Comprehensive Programs.** Community colleges usually offer a wide range of programs that enable students to select those that are appropriate to their interests and abilities.
- 9. Technical Education.** Community colleges specialize in providing students with quality vocational and technical education programs.
- 10. Convenience.** Community colleges are very convenient for students because there is usually one located within driving distance of home.

**V. Compare Colleges.** If your child has applied to more than one school, he may have to choose the school that is right for his needs. But he should also look at the financial aid packages offered by each school. Financial aid can play a big factor in choosing a school. For example, one school may offer him a package that includes a large student loan, while another school may cover all his costs through grants, scholarships, and work-study. That's why it's wise to apply to more than one college: multiple applications give you multiple choices.

You can also use this **College Comparison Worksheet** we've provided to help you compare some of the other typical factors that may affect your child's choice of a college. This worksheet can be a valuable guide to collecting information about colleges as well. You can use the Internet to fill it out. All you have to do is locate the websites for three colleges that interest your child and locate the necessary information. The key items on this worksheet are the admission requirements, academic information, costs, and financial aid requirements: **But you and your child will have to determine the items that are most important to you.**

**1. Admission Requirements**

Will my child be eligible to meet the admission standards of this school? When is the deadline to apply?  
What information do I need to apply?

**2. Academic Information**

Does this school offer what my son needs to qualify him for his chosen career?  
Does this school offer a better program than any of the others to which my son has applied?

**3. College Expenses**

How much are my son's expenses at this school—books, fees, housing, etc.?  
Should we choose a college simply based on cost?  
Can we afford a more expensive school?  
How will we cover the costs?

**4. Financial Aid**

What scholarships does the college offer?  
What are the deadlines for applying for scholarships?  
How do we apply?  
Which aid package is best for my son

## College Comparison Worksheet

<b>COLLEGE NAME</b>			
<b>TYPE</b> (Community College, 4 Year, Technical)			
<b>Size</b> Enrollment Size of campus			
<b>Environment</b> Urban Rural Co-ed Male Female Religious affiliation			
<b>Admission Requirements</b> Deadline Tests required Average test scores Average GPA Average Rank of student Special requirements Notification			
<b>Academics</b> Your major offered Special requirements Accreditation Student-faculty ratio Typical class size			
<b>Expenses</b> Tuition Room and Board Estimated total budget Application fee			
<b>Financial Aid</b> Deadline Required forms % receiving aid Scholarships			
<b>Housing</b> Availability Food plan Types			
<b>Facilities</b>			
<b>Activities</b>			

## VI. APPLYING FOR COLLEGE

**A. Being Prepared Can Make All the Difference.** Applying for college is another very important process for your child. Failure to do it properly can result in an unnecessary delay or even the failure to be admitted. We've assembled some good information and practical tips here to help you and your child stay prepared so that you don't experience any unforeseen disappointments with regard to your child's admission to college.

**Tip #1: Gather Your Information Ahead of Time.** When your child is a junior in high school, she should start to gather information from the college or colleges that she wants to attend. This information should include admission standards, application procedures, and application deadlines. You can help a great deal by looking at this information carefully with him. **To find this information, use the Internet. Go to the college website and download what you need.**

**Tip #2: Get Copies of Application Forms.** High school students should start collecting application forms from colleges that interest them. Parents and children can look them over to get a good idea of all the information they will have to provide. Students can now apply in writing or electronically for college application forms. Many college web sites have easy-to-understand application instructions.

**Tip #3: Check Into Fee Waivers.** The average college application is around \$25. Some colleges charge up to \$60 and others do not have any application fees. This fee is usually non-refundable, even if you are not accepted. **Many colleges offer fee waivers for applicants from low-income families. If you need a fee waiver, see your guidance counselor or Take Stock in Children Student Advocate.**

**Tip #4: Get Your High School Transcript Form Completed.** Your child's high school transcript is an important document. It must be filled out by an official at his high school. If a blank transcript form comes with your admission materials, you should give it to the guidance office to complete as early as possible. Some colleges send this form directly to your school after receiving your application.

**Tip #5: Find Out What Type of Admission Test is Required.** At many colleges, your child will have to submit SAT I/II or ACT test scores. Many colleges require admission tests because they are a standard way of measuring a student's ability to do college-level work. The key is to know, in your child's junior year, which test or tests he must take so that he has time to register and take the test in his senior year.

**Tip #6: Gets as Many Letters of Recommendation as Possible.** Many private colleges ask candidates to submit one or more letters of recommendation from a teacher, counselor, or other adult who knows them well. When asking someone to write such a letter, be sure to do so well before the college's deadline and get as many letters as possible so that you can choose the best ones.

**Tip #7: Get Help with the College Essay.** Private colleges often require an essay. Essays are also required for most scholarship applications. Your child should get as much help as possible to complete these essays. He can first ask for help from English or Composition teachers at his school. He can also use websites to learn about essays on his own. [Have him check the **Student Resource Center** and **Student Library** for more information.]

**Tip # 8: Remember the Application Do's and Don'ts.** Here are some good things to do and not do with regard to applying for college:

**Do....**

- Read all directions carefully.
- Apply online, if possible, so you are less likely to make careless errors.
- Have someone read and proofread all parts of your application.
- Use your essay as a chance to show admission officers that you are more than grades and test scores.
- Include anything that makes you stand out from the crowd, such as honors, awards, or special talents.
- Review your high school transcript before you send it to colleges, making sure that it accurately reflects your courses, activities, awards, and grades.
- Make copies of everything you send.
- Keep track of when and where you send material.
- Find out if the college accepts special material such as a sample of your artwork.

**Don't....**

- Procrastinate.
- Lie or exaggerate—it will come back to haunt you.
- Leave off important details. For example, if you play in the school band, include what instrument you play.
- Get sloppy with typos or the application's appearance. It looks like you just did not care.
- Borrow ideas for your essays, whether from a friend or a Web site. Your essay should be your own.
- Go way over the college's length limit for an essay. Admissions officers have limited time, and lots of essays to review.
- Drop the ball once your application is sent. Write thank you letters to recommendation writers and call colleges to see if your application is complete.
- Be a pest. Contact the admission office only once or twice a month.

**Tip #9: Find Out More on Your Own.** If your child wants additional assistance, have him visit the "Getting into College" page on the College Board web site: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). Or go to: [www.c3apply.org](http://www.c3apply.org). The Parent Library, Student Library, and Student Resource Center can link him to excellent **College Planners**—interactive planning tools available on the Internet. These Planners combine a calendar and a task list with links to websites that help students complete the tasks.

**Conclusion.** The Parent Guide to College is a resource that you can review and use each year to make sure that your child is adequately prepared for college. You can also look over the Student Resource Center and Student Library as well. These are excellent resources for your child. **Take Stock in Children advises every parent of a Take Stock in Children scholar to encourage him to read over these materials and use them to complete his Student Success Portfolio. This Portfolio is your child's own personal success tool.**

As you can see, Take Stock in Children has created a lot of effective products that you and your child can use to increase his chances of success. These products contain many, many links to other excellent Internet resources. If you use them, your child will be more likely to do as well. That's why these parent guides are so important. **They give parents the chance to work hand-in-hand, step-by-step with their children all the way through school.**

**Parents are the number one success factor in the lives of their children. These materials have been designed to make it easier and more enjoyable for you to promote the success of your child. We hope you use them with your child soon. Good luck!**