

Research I

The **BIG** Idea

- How can I find out if I'm academically qualified to attend the colleges on my list?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up (5 minutes)
- II. Comparing Academic Readiness with School Selectiveness (20 minutes)
- III. College Research Begins (15 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

PORTFOLIO PAGES:

- Portfolio pages 13- 22, My Top Ten Schools (from previous lesson)

STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 144, College Research Vocabulary
- Student Handbook page 145, My Top Ten Schools Tips

Overhead and LCD projector

Laptop with Internet connection

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Compare their GPA, test scores, and class rank with qualifications required for colleges on their list.
- Begin researching college websites to find out more about the student population, facilities, academics, campus life, and the surrounding community.

OVERVIEW

The next three lessons in this unit are devoted to further research of the colleges discovered last week using the School Finder tool on IHaveAPlanIowa.gov. Each of these lessons begins with a review of some aspect of the application process: comparing academic qualifications to school requirements, applying for financial aid, and assembling materials needed for applications.

In this lesson, students use the Academic Tracker, an online tool on the College Board's website, to compare their academic readiness with each of their potential college's selectiveness/difficulty. Students then move on to consider elements that they're looking for in a school. At the conclusion of the lesson, students discuss their research findings, both positive and negative, and share ideas on next steps.

PREPARATION

- If you've not already done so in Education After High School 1, meet with your school's counselor(s) to obtain students' transcripts. Explain the purpose of this lesson: to compare students' class rank, GPA, and test scores with college requirements.
- Go to: <http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/academictracker/servlet/ACTServlet> and familiarize yourself with the "Academic Tracker" tool.
- Arrange for the class to use the computer lab.
- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Write the web address: <http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/academictracker/servlet/ACTServlet> on the board.
- The following handout needs to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
 - **Student Handbook page 144, College Research Vocabulary**
 - **Student Handbook page 145, My Top Ten Schools Tips**
 - **Portfolio pages 13- 22, My Top Ten Schools** (from previous lesson)
- Tell students to bring in the college catalogs, applications, and other materials that should be arriving in the mail over the next few weeks.

VOCABULARY

American College Test (ACT): college entrance exam that measures educational development in English, mathematics, social studies, and the natural sciences. (NOTE: Most colleges accept scores from either the ACT or SAT.)

Class Ranking: a number that compares students to others in his or her graduating class, usually based on grade point average. (For example, a student is 40th in a class of 250.)

Financial Aid: any type of assistance used to pay college costs.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): form that must be completed to receive federal financial aid. Determines how much financial help your family can be expected to contribute to your college education.

GPA (Grade Point Average): the average grade earned by a student, figured by dividing the grade points earned by the number of credits taken.

Major: your field of specialization in college.

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT): an exam measuring the critical thinking skills needed for academic success in college. It measures skills in three areas: critical reading, mathematics, and writing. (Note: Most colleges accept scores from either the ACT or SAT.)

Transcript: a record of the classes taken by a student in high school and the grades earned.

Tuition: fees paid for instruction, especially for post-secondary education.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

For **Activity II, Comparing Academic Readiness with School Selectiveness**, if you are not teaching in Iowa you may wish to use another college as an example.

It is highly unlikely that your students will complete their research for all ten schools during the

three research classes. Feel free to reduce the number of schools students are required to research to four or five. Students be should strongly encouraged to complete the research for the rest of their schools on their own time.

If your students' transcripts do not include their GPAs, use the chart below to help students determine their approximate GPAs for **Activity II, Comparing Academic Readiness with School Selectiveness**.

GPA CALCULATOR

GPA	(In Letter Grades)	(In Number Grades)
3.75+	A	93-100
3.5 – 3.74	A-	90-92
3.25 – 3.49	B+	87-89
3.0 – 3.24	B/B-	80-86
2.5 – 2.99	C+	77-79
2.0 – 2.49	C-/C	70-76
1.0 – 1.99	D	60-69
Below 1.0	F	59 or below

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. As students enter the classroom, hand them their high school transcripts. Have them take out **Portfolio pages 13-22, My Top Ten Schools** from last week's lesson.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Last week, your online research resulted in a list of ten schools. Over the next three weeks, you will spend time in this class researching information for each of the colleges on your list. You will use online tools and any of the college materials you ordered that arrive during this time. What you find out will help you narrow your list and help you think about what you want in a college. As you research each school on your list, you will discover answers to questions such as... [Write these on the board]
 - What is the student population like?
 - What campus facilities (dorms, dining halls, rec center, library) are available?
 - What academic programs are offered?
 - What social activities are offered?
 - What is the off-campus community like?

As you begin your research, keep in mind that this process is not just about which college will or will not accept you, but also about what you want in a college.

3. Project **Student Handbook page 144, College Research Vocabulary** on the overhead projector.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: First, let's talk about what the school wants. You will begin your research by using an online tool that compares your academic record with averages from the freshmen class of each college you're considering. Some information about your academic record—such as grade point average (GPA), SAT or ACT scores, and class rank—will be required. Let's take a look at the overhead to review these terms.

Invite volunteers to read definitions of GPA, SAT or ACT and Class Rank from **College Research Vocabulary** on the overhead. Then instruct students to open to **Portfolio pages 13-22, My Top Ten Schools**, from last week's lesson. Using their transcripts, have them fill in their GPA, SAT/ACT scores, and Class Rank at the top right-hand corner of the first page.

NOTE: If students have not taken the SAT/ACT at this point in the year, tell them to leave it blank and fill it in once they've taken the test and received their scores.

II. Comparing Academic Readiness with School Selectiveness (20 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Last week, the information you gathered from your School Finder search on IHaveAPlanIowa.gov included the middle range of ACT and SAT scores for students at schools of your choice.
2. Using a computer and LCD projector, walk students through the use of the Academic Tracker found at <http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/academictracker/servlet/ACTServlet>. Demonstrate how to use the tool by modeling these steps:

Step 1: Type "University of Iowa" in FIND A COLLEGE BOX and click **FIND**.

Step 2: Enter information for a hypothetical student in the Update Academic Profile on the right side of the screen, as follows:

- For "GPA" select 3.0-3.24.
- For "Class Rank," select Top Half.
- Click **UPDATE**.

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's see how I stack up against current freshmen at University of Iowa. [Click the "How do I stack up?" tab at the top.] What percentage of freshmen has the same GPA range as mine? [14%] What percentage of students have GPAs greater than mine? [80%] What percentage of students have lower GPAs? [6%]

Click the link **How important is this to the college?** and invite a volunteer to read it aloud.

4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's scroll down to see how my class rank compares to the current freshman class at University of Iowa. I see that more than 91% of the freshman class are in the top half of their class, just like me. [Click the link **How important is this to the college** and invite a volunteer to read it aloud.]
5. Project **Portfolio page 13, My Top Ten Schools**, on the overhead projector. Point to the box that says "Academic Info".

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: **My Top Ten Schools** has a space titled "Academic Info" for you to write the percentage of GPA ranges and high school class rank of freshmen at

each college you research. First, be sure you've written the name of the college at the top. [Write University of Iowa at the top]. Then write percentages of each PGA as they appear on Academic Tracker. [On the overhead projector, write the GPA ranges and percentage of students with that range for the University of Iowa.]

NOTE: School stats may change from year to year.

Next, you will write down the percentages of each class rank range.

6. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now it is your chance to go online and use the Academic Tracker to compare yourself academically to each school on your list. Remember to note your findings on **Portfolio pages 13- 22, My Top Ten Schools**.
7. Give students 10 minutes to find and record the information. When they have finished, ask them what the purpose of this information is.

Knowing how students compare with others students should give them an idea of whether the school is a good fit academically—how likely it is that they'll be accepted and do well there. Remind students that they should not rule out a school because they're not an exact fit. These numbers provide best guesses about whether a school is a good fit, not guarantees.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: In addition, you can use the Academic Tracker to see what high school courses are recommended by a particular college. It also includes the SAT and ACT information.

8. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** When considering you for admission, schools look at more than your academic standing, but knowing how you compare academically can help you to figure out if a school is a safety, match, or reach. You can record your best guess in the "Academic Match?" box on the **My Top Ten Schools** page.

Let's look at our model for University of Iowa as an example. Notice that more than 80% of freshmen have GPAs higher than the one we used as an example, making the school a bit of a reach. And, more than 91% of freshmen at University of Iowa were in the top half of their high school class, making that a match with our class ranking (also top half). So University of Iowa is somewhere between a match and a reach. Remember that while academic information can be a predictor of sorts, schools look at other factors as well, such as the difficulty of the courses you took, your extracurricular activities, and your college essay (where required).

Have students check off the “Academic Match” box on their **My Top Ten Schools** portfolio pages.

III. College Research Begins (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now that you’ve researched the academic factors (GPAs, test scores, and class rank) for each college on your list, it’s important to research other aspects, too. Remember, the college search process is a two-way street—the college decides if you have what it takes academically to be admitted, and you decide if the school is right for you academically, socially, financially, etc. To figure this out, you will research the items listed on **Portfolio pages 13-22, My Top Ten Schools**. You may use online materials (college web sites) and offline materials (catalogs and other materials received in the mail) to conduct your research.
2. Keep **Portfolio page 13, My Top Ten Schools**, from **Activity II**, projected on the overhead. Using a computer, go to University of Iowa at www.uiowa.edu and display the home page using an LCD projector.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Let’s continue to look at University of Iowa. Where do you think you should click if you are coming to this school as a freshman? [Admissions] That’s right! You’d be a future student. Keep in mind, not every college web site is the same. Some sites may have an “undergraduate” or “future students” link. And sometimes a school may call it something else altogether. In those cases, you may have to search around a bit. Now, look at the categories at the top of the page in the yellow bar AND look at the categories to research on your **My Top Ten Schools** page. Which of these links do you think will be helpful for your research? [Majors and Programs, Housing, Costs and Financial Aid, Student Life, Visit Campus] Excellent!

Sometimes information is not very easy to find on a web site. The information you’re looking for may be buried many pages deep. Sites such as IHaveAPlanIowa.gov, College Board, Princeton Review, and Peterson’s provide profiles or summaries of colleges that give you the facts you need right up front. For example, when you type a college into College Search on Collegeboard.com, a profile comes up with information about setting, student population, and academics. So, if you can’t find what you need on a college’s website or a catalog, try one of these sites.

Want to find out what students who go to a college have to say about it? Some sites, such as Princeton Review, feature areas where current students give future students like you an insider’s point of view. (www.princetonreview.com asks you to create a Account

ID and password to access comments on student life).

Researching can be a lengthy process, but it can also be fun and amazingly helpful as you search for schools that will be right for you.

3. Project **Student Handbook page 145, My Top Ten School Tips** while students conduct their research. Students may also refer to their own copies of this page for reference as they research. Circulate throughout the classroom as students conduct research, helping them as needed. Refer students to **Student Handbook page 144, College Research Vocabulary**, to check unfamiliar terminology related to their research.

IV. Wrap Up: Research Findings (5 minutes)

1. Have students stop researching for today. Remind them that they have two more lessons devoted mostly to researching. Encourage them to share their findings so far.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Who found a college today that seems like a great match for them? What makes it a great match? [Allow students time to respond.]

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** What information did you find that is confusing or discouraging? [Give students a chance to respond.] What do you think you can do to overcome these difficulties? [Give students a chance to respond. Then ask how you or other students in the class can help.]

College Research Vocabulary

American College Test (ACT): college entrance exam that measures educational development in English, mathematics, social studies, and the natural sciences. (NOTE: Most colleges accept scores from either the ACT or SAT.)

Class Rank: student's academic standing in his or her graduating class. For example, top 25 percent, lower 50 percent, etc.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): financial aid form from the federal government for students seeking aid.

Financial Aid: any type of assistance used to pay college costs.

Grade Point Average (GPA): a weighted average based on the grades you receive and the number of credits you take.

Major: subject area a student concentrates in during college. At most colleges, students take a third to half of their courses in their major.

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT): an exam measuring the critical thinking skills needed for academic success in college. It measures skills in three areas: critical reading, mathematics, and writing. (NOTE: Most colleges accept scores from either the ACT or SAT.)

Transcript: official record of a student's coursework.

Tuition: cost of instruction charged by a school; tuition does not include fees, books, room, meals, or other charges.

MY TOP TEN SCHOOLS

Name of College _____

My Info

My GPA: _____
 My Class Rank: _____
 My ACT score: _____
 My SAT score: _____

General Info (from IHaveAPlanIowa.gov)

Location (At A Glance tab): _____

Enrollment (At A Glance tab): _____

Mid-50% SAT score: _____

Mid-50% ACT score: _____

Average second semester grade: _____

Tuition (In-State): _____

Website: _____

The College Board's Academic Tracker shows the percentage of freshman who enter with a particular GPA and class rank. Beside each number, write the % for this school.

<http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/academictracker/servlet/ACTServlet>

Academic Info (from www.collegeboard.com)

GPA:

3.75+ _____

3.5 – 3.74 _____

25.25- 3.49 _____

3.0 – 3.24 _____

2.5 – 2.99 _____

2.0 – 2.49 _____

1.0– 1.99 _____

below 1.0 _____

Class rank:

Top tenth _____

Top quarter _____

Top half _____

Bottom half _____

Bottom quarter _____

Academic match?

Safety (I'm likely to get in) Good match A reach?

Your
Opinion
Here

<p>Academics (Academics tab)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majors • Faculty 	<p>College web sites and catalogs have an “Academics” section where you will find a list of majors and minors. This section will also tell you what type of Academic Calendar the school operates on. Information about faculty is also available.</p>
<p>Student Population (Student Life tab)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity • Percent of Freshmen who live in school housing 	<p>Find population facts under the Student Life tab in IHaveAPlanIowa.gov. If you research on other sites, you might find this information in the “About the College” section.</p>
<p>Campus Facilities (Student Life tab)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living on Campus (Dorms information) 	<p>Look in the “Student Life” section of any college catalog or web site to find out about where on campus to live, eat, study, work out, hang out, and much more.</p>
<p>Campus Life (Student Life tab)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extracurricular Activities/Student Organizations • Fraternity/Sorority • Athletics 	<p>Look in the “Student Life” section of any college catalog or web site to find out about on-campus activities, clubs, organizations, sports, and fraternities and sororities.</p>
<p>Off-Campus Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things to Do (At a Glance tab, Campus Summary) • Transportation (Student Life tab, Getting Away) 	<p>College web sites and catalogs feature a section about the community where the college is located. In IHaveAPlanIowa.gov this is found under both the At A Glance tab and the Student Life tab. In other sites this might appear right on the home page, or under a heading like “About the College”.</p>
<p>Is this school for me? <input type="checkbox"/> Probably not <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely Your Opinion Here</p>	