

# UNIT 5

## EDUCATION AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

### Lesson Descriptions

#### **Education After High School 1: Choosing Courses for Senior Year**

*Which senior year courses will I need to graduate and which will best help me reach my educational and career goals? NOTE: This lesson requires coordination with your school counselor.*

#### **Education After High School 2: Choosing a College Major**

*What is a college major and how do I choose one?*

#### **Education After High School 3: Other Educational Paths**

*What are the benefits and things to consider for various one- and two-year programs, apprenticeships, and the military?*

#### **Education After High School 4: Evaluating Post-secondary Options**

*What should I consider when evaluating post-secondary options?*

#### **Education After High School 5: Choosing a College**

*How can I identify colleges to consider for education after high school?*

*NOTE: This lesson requires coordination with your school counselor.*

#### **Education After High School 6: Research I**

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

#### **Education After High School 7: Research II**

*What financial aid options exist, and what can I do to prepare to apply for financial aid?*

#### **Education After High School 8: Research III**

*How do I decide where to apply, and how do I begin the process?*

#### **Education After High School 9: Letters of Recommendation**

*How can I get a positive letter of recommendation for college?*

*NOTE: This lesson requires coordination with your school counselor.*

# PLANNING PYRAMID

## GRADE 11, Unit 5, Education After High School



### Some Students Will:

- Use resources provided to continue college research outside of class.

### Most Students Will:

- Investigate college majors and make a tentative choice.
- Identify questions to ask to determine the quality of education at post-secondary schools.
- Research and compare college choices to determine at least one reach, match, and safety school.
- Understand remaining steps needed to select colleges and apply.
- Get a letter of recommendation suitable for a college application.

### All Students Will:

- Select courses for senior year based on high school graduation requirements, career choice, and (where applicable) recommended college prep courses.
- Understand the breadth of college course offerings and the flexibility permitted in meeting college requirements.
- Understand the benefits and potential drawbacks of community college, tech/trade schools, apprenticeships, and military training.
- Identify resources for tech/trade research.
- Understand the four types of financial aid and the FAFSA's role in determining needs-based aid.
- Understand the purpose of a letter of recommendation, and how to prepare a recommender to write an effective one.

# ROADS to SUCCESS

Grade 11 Education After High School

Family Newsletter

## Getting Ready for College

**Roads to Success** is a new program designed to help middle and high school students prepare for their futures. This newsletter will keep you posted on what we're doing in school, and how families can follow through at home.

For more information about Roads to Success, please visit our website: [www.roadstosuccess.org](http://www.roadstosuccess.org)

**Did you know?** In 2007-2008, the U.S. government provided \$83 billion in grants, work-study, and low-interest college loans. During the 2008-2009 school year, more than \$130 billion in financial aid was available to students and their families.

SOURCE:  
<http://studentaid.ed.gov>

What are you doing for the rest of your life? It's a scary question for many high school juniors and seniors. Even students who know what they want (and are well on the way to getting it) get nervous about the long list of things to do to get ready for the next step in their education.

Here are some things to focus on during junior year:

**Investigate.** Students should gather information about schools so they know where they want to apply next fall. Experts suggest that students apply to more than one school. To find the best match, students should select some schools that are difficult to get into and some that are easier.

Junior year is also a great time to visit schools for a first-hand look.



**Take the SAT or ACT.** Many schools select students based on grades and scores received on the SAT or ACT. Students may take these tests more than once. A first try during spring of junior year leaves time for a second try during fall of senior year.

**Don't be discouraged by the high cost of college.** Financial aid is available to families that need it.

All students should plan on completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in January of their senior year. The FAFSA uses information about family income to determine the amount of financial help students receive.

**Remember that there are good educational options for every student.** Four-year colleges, community colleges, tech/trade schools, and apprenticeships are all worth investigating to find the perfect fit.

For more information, visit [IHaveAPlanlowa.gov](http://IHaveAPlanlowa.gov).

## Grade by Grade

In Grade 11, Roads to Success students spend nine weeks exploring their educational options – from apprenticeships to trade school, the military to 4-year colleges. They review their own grades and compare their performance with college entrance requirements. They discuss college majors and see what's recommended for their chosen careers. Finally, they compare colleges and select schools that seem like a good fit.

By fall of senior year, students should have a good idea of schools where they want to apply. This means the summer after junior year is a good time to continue college research. During senior year, Roads to Success will guide students through the application process, whether they're headed to school or work.



## Choosing Courses for Senior Year

### The **BIG** Idea

- Which senior year high school courses will I need to graduate and which will best help me reach my educational and career goals?

### AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: Looking Back, Looking Ahead (10 minutes)
- II. Graduation Requirements (5 minutes)
- III. Courses for Your Career and Interests (5 minutes)
- IV. Courses for College-Bound Seniors (5 minutes)
- V. Preliminary Course Selection (15 minutes)
- VI. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

### MATERIALS

#### ☐ PORTFOLIO PAGES:

- Portfolio page 11, Four-Year Plan
- Portfolio page 1, Interest Profiler and Basic Skills Survey Results
- Portfolio page 2, Evaluating Top Career Choices (from Careers 2)

#### ☐ STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 122, Recommended Courses for College
- Student Handbook page 123, Questions for My School Counselor

#### ☐ FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW

#### ☐ Overhead projector

- ☐ Sample packet of local school district's 12th grade course selection forms and information (e.g., background information on course selection process, student data form, listing of 12th grade courses w/ syllabus, course selection form, etc.)

### OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Understand which courses are required for high school graduation in their state or district.
- Understand which courses are required or recommended by four-year colleges.
- Identify the courses that will help them explore their interests and prepare for future careers.
- Use the criteria above to select courses for their senior year.

## OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students begin to select courses for their senior year. They first record the classes they will have completed by the end of junior year. Then they review three important criteria for selecting classes: state or district requirements for graduation; courses that help them prepare for specific careers and explore their interests; and requirements or recommendations for college-bound students. Next, they use a listing of course offerings to select options for next year. Finally, they complete a list of questions for their school counselor regarding their final selections. Some schools may elect to use this class for official course selection by inviting the school counselor to co-facilitate.

## PREPARATION

- This lesson is designed to help students prepare for their meetings with the school counselor to select courses for the 12th grade. Be sure to coordinate with the counselor to become better acquainted with the processes involved. If possible, invite your school counselor to serve as a co-facilitator of this lesson. Having him/her present will be incredibly valuable in answering students' specific questions.
- You will need to contact local school officials well in advance of this lesson to identify and assemble necessary information and forms for your district's course selection process (juniors choosing courses for their senior year). This packet of information should include: district or state requirements for graduation, a listing of senior year courses, the course selection card or form, and any other information needed to help students and their parents understand the senior year course selection process.
- Ask your school counselor if it's possible to access a copy of each student's transcript so students don't have to guess regarding the number of credits they've accumulated.
- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Write the day's vocabulary word and definition on the board.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
  - **Student Handbook page 122, Recommended Courses for College**
  - **Portfolio page 11, Four-Year Plan**
  - **Portfolio pages 4-5, Education Requirements**

## VOCABULARY .....

**Advanced Placement (AP) Classes:** challenging courses that give students the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school. Students must successfully complete an exam at the end of each AP course.

## IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS .....

### DO NOW:

*(You may choose to present the Warm Up activity as a written Do Now. Present the questions on the board or on an overhead projector, and have students write only their answers on index cards. You can also choose to give the students a handout by copying **Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW.**)*

#### Questions:

1. How many credits do you need to graduate from your high school?
2. What are some examples of advanced courses your school offers?
3. What career do you think you would most like to pursue? What classes do you think you could take during your senior year that would help you reach that career goal?

After they have completed their answers, call on students to read their answers. Then begin with the **Warm Up** as written.

**Activity IV, Courses for College-Bound Seniors:** If you already know some colleges to which students will likely apply, you may want to check their course requirements and recommendations online. An easy resource for this information is the College Board. Enter the college name under “College QuickFinder” (<http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/search/index.jsp>) Once you’ve selected your college, click through several screens to find the “Am I On Track?” feature. This Academic Tracker allows students to compare courses they’ve completed with college recommendations. (This website is revisited in **Education After HS 6, College Research I.**)

**Activity V, Preliminary Course Selection:** If your school has an official course request form for students to complete, you may choose to have students complete this form instead of completing the 12th grade column in **Portfolio page 11, Four-Year Plan.**

With students’ permission, you may wish to collect **Student Handbook page 123, Questions for My School Counselor**, to share students’ scheduling concerns.

## ACTIVITY STEPS

### I. Warm Up: Looking Back, Looking Ahead (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Welcome, everybody. This week, we're going to begin a new unit on Education After High School. Right now, you all may have very different plans, from going to a four-year college, to completing a technical degree, to launching right into a career. But whatever your plan, it's important to know what kind of education or training can help you in your future and how you can prepare for that now. In today's lesson, we're going to look at an important decision you'll be making about your immediate future — planning your classes for next year.
2. Have students turn to **Portfolio page 11, Four-Year Plan.**  
**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** To start, please fill in the courses for the first three years — in other words, the high school classes that you took in 9th and 10th grade along with the classes you are currently taking. This is an essential step in determining which classes you'll take next year. Now, we'll review some of the criteria for choosing next year's classes, including:
  - Which classes you need to graduate
  - Which classes fit your interest and career goals
  - Which classes are required or recommended by colleges
3. Give students about five minutes to complete the first three years of this chart (9th–11th), reminding them to leave the fourth column (12th) blank.

### II. Graduation Requirements (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** First things, first: How many of you want to graduate from high school? (Show of hands.) Of course you all do! So that's the first thing we want to consider when choosing courses for next year. Let's take a look at what's required in our district/state.
2. Hand out the list of district/state requirements for graduation, and display a copy on the overhead projector. Review the credits for each subject required by your district/state.
3. Give students a few minutes to review the requirements and compare them to their own Four-Year Plans.
4. Take a few minutes to let students ask questions about these requirements.

### III. Courses for Your Career and Interests (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Of course, graduation requirements shouldn't be the only thing you consider. You want to choose courses that match your personal interests and career goals, too. This is important whether you're planning on a career, a two-year college, or a four-year college.

Earlier this year, you completed the IHaveAPlanIowa.gov's Interest Profiler to identify careers that matched your interests and goals. For your top career choice, you recorded recommended classes from IHaveAPlanIowa.gov. Let's turn back to **Portfolio pages 4-5, Education Requirements**, to review those lists.

2. Display a copy of this page on the overhead projector to remind them what this form looked like.
3. Give each student their list of recommended courses and instruct them to review their list for the next few minutes, noting the recommended courses for their selected careers. Encourage them to write down new or different interests that may not be on their list. In addition, prompt students to think about why the subjects on their list have been recommended.

NOTE: If your students find that many of the subjects recommended by IHaveAPlanIowa.gov are not offered at their school, facilitate a quick discussion about how else they could gain experience in those areas (extracurricular clubs or activities, internships/jobs, summer programs, etc.). In addition, stress to students that it's ok if they can't take every subject recommended by IHaveAPlanIowa.gov.

### IV. Courses for College-Bound Seniors (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** The final thing you'll want to consider when choosing classes are the requirements and recommendations for college. Now, this is important to everyone, even if you're not planning to apply for college next year. These courses are also an important foundation for success in most careers.

If you have capable students who aren't planning on taking college courses, you may point out that people can decide to enter college at any age, and can take courses to get ready at a local community college if they haven't had them before. But the opportunity cost for postponing these pre-college courses is that 1) these courses will cost money later on, and 2) adult students often have to fit school into a schedule that includes other responsibilities—like a job or family. Now is a great time to take college prep courses – while it costs them nothing and school is their main responsibility.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's take a look at the courses that are recommended by most colleges. Please turn to **Student Handbook page 122, Recommended Courses for College**. [Display this page on the overhead projector and review the recommendations as a class.]

Keep in mind that these are general recommendations. You'll want to check with the colleges you're applying to for their specific requirements. [See **IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS** for a recommended website to find this information.]

Note if there are any differences between the graduation requirements from your high school and the college recommendations. For example, if your school requires students to complete two years of foreign language, students who are planning on applying to a four-year college should be encouraged to take a third year.

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** You'll also note that **Advanced Placement** courses are at the bottom of this list. Raise your hand if you've ever heard of an AP class. (Show of hands) Who can tell me something they already know about these classes? [Allow students to respond.] These are challenging courses that give you an opportunity to earn college credit. These courses are usually taken during senior year. To earn credit, you must successfully complete an AP exam at the end of the course. Keep in mind that AP classes are not required for college admission, but are highly recommended. What are some reasons to take AP courses? [Allow students to respond and list their ideas on chart paper or the board.] You are exactly right. Not only do they give you a head start in college, they also improve your chances of admission. After all, if you can successfully complete an AP course, you've already proven to a college that you are willing and able to succeed in more challenging courses. And you save money because AP courses count for college credit.
4. Give students a few minutes to review the recommendations and compare them to their **Four-Year Plan**. They may also want to compare these courses with those in their **Portfolio pages 4-5, Education Requirements**, which recommend courses that prepare students for specific career paths.
5. Take a few minutes to let students ask questions about these requirements.

## V. Preliminary Course Selection (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now that we've reviewed some of the most important criteria for choosing courses, it's time to take a first pass at making your own choices. You will be choosing courses from this list of course offerings for next year. [Hand out copies of this list (obtained from your school counselor) and display a copy on the overhead projector.] You'll share these preliminary choices with the school counselor when you make your final schedule.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Please turn back to **Portfolio page 11, Four-Year Plan** that you started at the beginning of the class. Now, I'd like you to take some time to complete the column for 12th grade, considering the criteria that we discussed today. Remember that the first thing to consider is whether you have the necessary graduation requirements.
3. Give students about 15 minutes for this step. Walk around the classroom to answer questions they may have as they make their selections.

## VI. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. Have students turn to their **Student Handbook page 123, Questions for My School Counselor**. Give students a few minutes to write down any questions they had as they were making their course selections.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Remember, the courses you selected today aren't set in stone. Over the next day or two, think about the ones you chose today. Which ones are you most excited about? Are you still wondering about any courses that aren't on your list? Add these thoughts and questions to the list you just started and share these with your school counselor.
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Great job today, everyone. Next week, we're going to talk more about education after high school and start exploring college majors—what they are and how to choose one that helps you meet your goals for the future.

## **DO NOW:** **Choosing Courses for Senior Year**

**Directions:** Read the questions below and record your responses.

1. How many credits do you need to graduate from your high school?

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2. What are some examples of advanced courses your school offers?

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3. What career do you think you would most like to pursue? What classes do you think you could take during your senior year that would help you reach that career goal?

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## Recommended High School Courses for College

Subject	Number of Courses	Recommended Courses
English	Four or more years	Grammar, composition, literature
Math	Three or more years	Algebra I and II, geometry, trigonometry and/or calculus
Science	Three or more years	Biology, chemistry, physics, earth/space science; include lab classes
Social Studies	Three or more years	U.S. history, U.S. government, economics, world history or geography, civics
Foreign Language	Three or more years	At least two years of the same language.
Other/Electives	Varies with colleges	Check with each college; some require courses in computer science or the arts (including visual arts, music, theater, drama, dance)
Advanced Placement (AP) Courses	Recommended	Courses available in different areas within science, social studies, English, foreign languages, and more. Check with your school to see which AP courses are offered.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions for My School Counselor

As you're figuring out your course schedule for next year, you'll probably have a lot of questions for your school counselor. Write your questions below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Four-year Plan

**Warm Up:** Please fill in the first three columns of the chart below to record your classes in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. Your teacher will provide instructions for filling in the column for 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

SUBJECT	Courses Taken/Planned			
	9th	10th	11th	12th
1. Language Arts				
2. Math				
3. Science				
4. Social Studies				
5. Foreign Language				
6. Other/ Electives (Arts, Computer Science, etc.)				



# EDUCATION AFTER HIGH SCHOOL **2**

## Choosing a College Major

### The **BIG** Idea

- What is a college major and how do I choose one?

### AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: Thinking About College (5 minutes)
- II. What Classes Will You Take in College? (10 minutes)
- III. Choosing a Major (10 minutes)
- IV. Which Major is Right for You? (15 minutes)
- V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

### OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Understand that colleges have course requirements that often offer more choice and flexibility than high school courses.
- Understand the connection between career aspirations and a choice of college major.
- Make a tentative choice of a college major.

### MATERIALS

#### **PORTFOLIO PAGES:**

- Portfolio page 1, Interest Profiler and Basic Skills Survey Results

#### **STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:**

- Student Handbook page 124, Thinking Ahead
- Student Handbook page 125, IHaveAPlanlowa.gov and College Board Directions
- Student Handbook page 126, Sample College Requirements
- Student Handbook page 127, What's a Major?
- Student Handbook page 128, Possible Majors and Schools

#### Overhead projector and/or LCD projector

#### Chart paper and markers

## OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students begin by reflecting on their expectations for college. Then they discuss college requirements and identify courses they would choose to fulfill those requirements. Next, they discuss college majors and review a list of common questions about college majors. Using IHaveAPlanlowa.gov, they identify recommended majors for a career of interest and find schools in their states that offer each major. Finally, they explore one of the majors they identified and list some of the typical courses within that major.

## PREPARATION

- Make arrangements for the class to use the computer lab, and make sure IHaveAPlanlowa.gov, or a similar website, is accessible from students' computers.
- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Write the day's vocabulary word and definition on the board.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
  - **Student Handbook page 126, Sample College Requirements**
  - **Student Handbook page 128, Possible Majors and Schools**
  - **Portfolio page 1, Interest Profiler and Basic Skills Survey Results**
- Write the following web addresses on the board, chart paper or overhead projector:
  - <http://www.ric.edu/academics/generalEducation.php/>
  - [www.IHaveAPlanlowa.gov](http://www.IHaveAPlanlowa.gov) (be sure that students have access to their own Account ID and password)
  - [www.collegeboard.com/csearch/majors\\_careers/profiles/](http://www.collegeboard.com/csearch/majors_careers/profiles/)

## VOCABULARY

**Major:** your field of specialization in college.

## IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS .....

In the **Warm Up**, you may prefer to introduce the topic, then present **Student Handbook page 124, Thinking Ahead**.

**Activity II, What Classes Will You Take in College?:** If time is limited, you may choose to complete this activity as a class.

If computer access is limited, you may wish to print out the website pages listing the University of Iowa core curriculum requirements for undergraduate students (<http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook> then click on General Education Program on the left side of the screen). Students could choose directly from these lists rather than going online themselves. This option may also be helpful if you think you will run short on time.

If you prefer, you may choose to find an example from a college near you.

**Activity IV, Which Major Is Right for You?** You may wish to choose a different major to explore required courses.

## ACTIVITY STEPS

### I. Warm Up: Thinking About College (5 minutes)

1. To begin this lesson, refer students to **Student Handbook page 124, Thinking Ahead**. Give students about three minutes to record their responses.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Welcome, everybody. This week, we're going to continue our unit on Education After High School. In today's lesson, we're going to look at the classes you take in college, what a major is, and how you choose a major.

### II. What Classes Will You Take in College? (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Just like in high school, most colleges have certain requirements that you must fulfill in order to graduate. You might be thinking that's a drag—after all, isn't college for taking the classes you want to take? Well, before you jump to any conclusions, there are three things to remember about these requirements:
  - First, four-year colleges have these requirements so that their graduates are well-rounded. They want their graduates to enter the world equipped with important skills and knowledge to help them succeed as adults.
  - Second, taking a wide range of courses means you'll be exposed to classes you might not take otherwise—and you might just discover a passion for something completely new.
  - Third, even though you'll still have to take courses in different subjects, there are many, many more courses to choose from to meet each requirement.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's take a look at an example of what a college might require for graduation. Please turn to **Student Handbook page 126, Sample College Requirements**. This chart shows the requirements for University of Iowa, a typical, large four-year state university. These are the courses that must be fulfilled in order to graduate.

As you see, these don't look like your typical high school requirements, do they? Rather than requiring a certain number of courses in different subject areas, their requirements are organized by objectives—in other words, the skills they feel are important for their students.

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now, you're probably wondering what kinds of classes will fulfill these objectives. Well, let's find out!

[Have students work in small groups or pairs to go online and view a list of courses that fulfill the Iowa College requirements: <http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook> and then click on **General Education Requirements**.]

4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's take a quick look at the first general education area, "Rhetoric." How many courses are students required to take to fulfill this objective? (A minimum of 4-8 semester hours.) If we click on **Rhetoric**, we will see that all but two of the rhetoric classes are worth 4 semester hours. Two of the rhetoric classes are worth three semester hours. This means that you would need to take one or two classes to meet the requirements. Why do you think that a range of required semester hours are listed? (Because some majors require four semester hours and others require up to eight.) How would you know how many you should take? (Look up your own major or speak to an advisor. Remind students that it is always recommended that they speak to an advisor when planning classes.)
  
5. Let's move on to the next general education area, "Foreign Language" How many classes are required for this objective? [Point out that fourth semester-proficiency is required.] Let's click on **Foreign Language** to learn what that means. [Read the explanation of the three ways that a student can achieve proficiency in a foreign language. Allow students to ask questions if they don't understand the process.]

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** The next General Education area is Interpretation of literature. three semester hours are required in this area. By clicking on **Interpretation of Literature**, we see that we have three classes to choose from.

6. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Great, now you're going to select four General Education Areas that interest you and choose one course requirement for each. Look at the related lists and choose the courses you would take to fulfill each requirement. Note that some courses are found under more than one Core Requirement, but you can't count the same course twice. If you use a course to satisfy one Core Requirement, you have to pick a different course for another general education area.
  
7. Give students time to choose one course for each of the Core Requirements they've chosen, and write their choices on their charts.

### III. Choosing a Major (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Chances are, someone's already asked you what you think you'll study in college. Some of you may already know, some of you may still be figur-

ing this out, and many of you have no idea. Today we're going to answer some basic questions about a college major. Please turn to **Student Handbook page 127, What's a Major?** As we discuss each of these questions, you can use this page to take notes.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** First of all, **what is a major?** A major is an academic subject or field that college students select to focus their studies. Depending on your major, somewhere between a quarter to a half of your courses will be in the major you choose. Just as you'll have some general graduation requirements, there will also be requirements within your major. (However, many of these requirements will overlap.)
  - **When do you choose a major?** Most colleges don't require you to declare a major until the end of your sophomore year. Students often take general courses in their first year or two of college, and focus on a major in their later years. In fact, unless you're absolutely sure about a major, it's probably wise not to rush into this decision. Instead, narrow down your choices of majors, and take classes in each one before you decide.
  - **Why do I have to think about this now?** You'll want to choose a school that offers the subjects (and majors) you want to study, or one that has a particularly strong program in that major.
  - **How do you choose a major?** Well, if you know what you want to do, you choose a major that will prepare you for that career. You can also choose a major that fits your talents, interests, and goals. We'll talk more about this in a few minutes.
  - **What if I have no idea?** That's okay. More than half of all college freshman start without knowing their major.
  - **What if I change my mind?** You can definitely change your major. But the sooner you do, the better, because if you wait too long, you may have to spend more time (and money) in school to fulfill all the requirements.
  - **What if I can't decide between two majors?** Since you'll be taking classes outside your major, you may find a passion for another subject. This doesn't mean you have to change your major—some schools offer "minors," which require fewer courses, but still show that you have a concentration in that subject. Some students choose to double-major, majoring in two different subjects. This is a great option if you have career plans that combine more than one subject. For example, say you want to be a scientific illustrator. You could get a double major in art and biology.

#### IV. Which Major is Right for You? (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** So which major is right for you? Fortunately, you'll have many, many to choose from—from agriculture to zoology. The major you choose should reflect your interests, talents, and career plans. After all, your major can put you on

the path to your future goals—and some careers may require or recommend certain majors. So if you know now what you want to do, you'll want to choose a major that puts you on the right path.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Choosing a major may seem like a scary decision. After all, you might think that choosing a major is really deciding on a career, right? Well, don't worry. Choosing a major is not picking a career. There are some majors that prepare you for a specific career, but most majors prepare you for many careers. Also, keep in mind that there are two main kinds of majors:
  - Career-oriented majors, like nursing, engineering, technicians, accounting. These majors put you directly on a path for that career.
  - Liberal arts majors, like English, history, political science, psychology, and sociology. You will gain many important skills from these majors, which can be used in a variety of careers. With these majors, you create your own career path.

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** How do you know which major will put you on the right path? One place to start is IHaveAPlanlowa.gov, which you used earlier in the year to find careers that matched your skills, interests, and goals. Let's turn back to your **Portfolio page 1, Interest Profiler and Basic Skills Survey Results**.

[Display a copy of this page on the overhead projector to remind them what this form looked like.]

4. Have students choose their top career choice from the **Portfolio page 1, Interest Profiler and Basic Skills Survey Results** page. Then have students turn to **Student Handbook page 128, Possible Majors and Schools** and write that career at the top of the page. Explain that in Part A, they'll be exploring that career using IHaveAPlanlowa.gov. On the IHaveAPlanlowa.gov site, they'll find related majors and schools in your state that offer programs that will prepare them for their top career interest.
5. Model how to use IHaveAPlanlowa.gov to find recommended majors for specific careers and colleges that offer those majors. For example:
  - Use your name and password to sign on to IHaveAPlanlowa.gov
  - Click **Career Planning** and then click **Explore Careers**
  - Enter "Police Detective" into the search bar
  - Click **Police Detective** for details about that career
  - Click **What to Learn** and scroll down to "Beyond High School"; point out that many similar majors may have different names at different colleges, such as "Forensic

Science and Technology”, “Criminal Justice/Police Science”, and “Criminalistics and Criminal Science”. Therefore, they should click on each one when they’re searching for programs.

- Click **Criminal Justice/Police Science**, then click **Schools Offering This Program** on the left side of the screen. Choose “Bachelor’s Degree” and then click **Go** for a list of schools in the state that offer that program.

6. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now you’re probably wondering what these majors are all about—and what kinds of classes you might take. For Part B, you’ll choose one major you identified in Part A and use another website to explore more details about that major.

Model how to use the College Board “Major Profiles” site ([http://www.collegeboard.com/csearch/majors\\_careers/profiles/](http://www.collegeboard.com/csearch/majors_careers/profiles/)) to find out more about a major, such as “Special Education.” Show students how to click the + sign to expand categories. Then point out the information available, specifically the “Typical Major Courses” listed in the right-hand column.

7. Give students about 10 minutes to complete **Student Handbook page 128, Possible Majors and Schools**.

## V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. Ask students to share what they found in their research and how they’re feeling about choosing and pursuing a major. Possible discussion questions include:
  - What were some of the majors recommended for your career?
  - When you identified typical classes for your major, which ones sounded interesting?
  - When you think about choosing and pursuing your major, what are you most excited about?
  - What makes you nervous?
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** If you’re feeling nervous or overwhelmed, remember that you don’t have to go it alone—you’ll have lots of help figuring this stuff out. College students are assigned academic advisors, who help you make course selections and approve your choices. They’ll also keep an eye on your schedules to make sure you’re on track to fulfill your requirements. Colleges also have Career Centers, where staff can help you figure out the best direction for you to take.
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Today, we’ve been focusing on four-year colleges. Next week, we’ll continue our unit on Education After High School, but look at other options for higher education, such as community colleges, technical and trade schools, and apprenticeships.

## THINKING AHEAD

Today we're going to talk about choosing classes and majors in college. Take a few minutes to reflect on what classes and majors you might want to pursue.

1. What career are you most interested in?

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2. What college major do you think would help you pursue that career?

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3. What is one question you have about selecting a college major?

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## IHaveAPlanIowa.gov and College Board Directions

### IHaveAPlanIowa.gov

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#### 1. Connecting to IHaveAPlanIowa.gov

- Type the web address into the dialog box ([www.IHaveAPlanIowa.gov](http://www.IHaveAPlanIowa.gov)).
- When the IHaveAPlanIowa.gov home page appears, type your Account ID and password into the dialog boxes provided and click **Sign In**.

#### 2. Possible Majors and Schools

- Click on the **Career Planning** tab and then on the **Explore Careers** section.
- Type in the name of the career you want to search for in the **Search Careers** box and click **Go**. (As an example, type in Police Detective, and click **Go**.)
- When the link appears, click it. (As an example, click on **Police Detective**.)
- Click on the blue **What to Learn** button on the left-hand side of the page and scroll down to the section called Beyond High School. Majors have different names at different colleges, so you can pick any of them when you're searching for programs. If the career you are reviewing doesn't have links to programs, go back to search results page and choose a similar career.
- Click on whichever program you're interested in. (As an example, click on **Criminal Justice/Police Science**.) This will take you to a program description. To view a list of schools in Iowa that offer this program, click **Schools Offering This Program** on the left side of the page.

### College Board

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#### 3. Connecting to College Board and Finding Majors

- Type the web address into the dialog box ([www.collegeboard.com/csearch/majors\\_careers/profiles/](http://www.collegeboard.com/csearch/majors_careers/profiles/)).
- Click on the **+** sign next to the field of study you're interested in. (As an example, click on **History**.)
- Then click on one of the subcategories to find out more. (As an example, click on **U.S. History**.)
- Scroll down, and on the right-hand side of the page, you should see a section titled **Typical Major Courses**.
- List the three major courses you're most interested in, in Part II of **Student Handbook page 128, Possible Majors and Schools**.

## SAMPLE COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS

The following chart shows the requirements of the University of Iowa General Education Requirements — the courses that must be fulfilled to graduate. Which classes would you choose if you went to University of Iowa?

1. Go to the University of Iowa General Education page for a list of courses that fulfill these requirements:  
<http://www.ric.edu/academics/generalEducation.php/> then click on **General Education Program**.
2. On the chart below, circle the four General education areas of Study that interest you the most.
3. For each of four selected categories, choose the courses you would take to fulfill the requirement.  
 (Some courses are found under more than one objective, but you can't count the same course twice. If you use a course to satisfy one objective, you have to pick a different course for another objective.)

Core Requirements	Requirements (# of Semester Hours)	Your Course Selection
<b>Rhetoric</b> Rhetoric courses help students to develop skills in speaking, writing, listening, and critical reading, and to build competence in research, analysis, and argumentation.	4-8 S.H.	
<b>Foreign Language</b> Courses in this area provide students with speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in a second language.	4th Semester Proficiency or Equivalent	
<b>Interpretation of Literature</b> Students focus on the major genres of literature and increase their abilities to read and analyze a variety of texts.	3 S.H.	
<b>Historical Perspectives</b> Courses in this area help students understand a period (or periods) of the past in its (their) own terms; comprehend the historical processes of change and continuity, sharpen their analytical skills in the evaluation of evidence, and develop their ability to generalize, explain, and interpret historical change.	3 S.H.	

<p><b>Humanities</b>          Courses in the humanities focus on the ways individuals and cultures have interpreted and understood themselves, others, and the world.</p>	3 S.H.	
<p><b>Natural Sciences</b>          These courses explore the scope and major concepts of a scientific discipline.</p>	7 S.H. including one lab	
<p><b>Quantitative or Formal Reasoning</b>          Courses in this area help develop analytical skills through the practice of quantitative or formal symbolic reasoning.</p>	3 S.H.	
<p><b>Social Sciences</b>          Courses in this area focus on human behavior and social systems that shape and are shaped by that behavior.</p>	3 S.H.	
<p><b>Distributed General Education:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Diversity</li> <li>• Fine Arts</li> <li>• Foreign Civilization and Culture</li> <li>• Health and Physical Activity</li> <li>• Historical Perspectives</li> <li>• Humanities</li> </ul>	6 S.H. total. 3 S.H. must be taken from two different categories	

## WHAT'S A MAJOR?

What will you major in? First, let's review some important information about majors. Take notes below as we discuss each question.

1. What is a major?

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2. When do you choose a major?

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3. Why do I have to think about this now?

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4. How do you choose a major?

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5. What if I have no idea?

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6. What if I change my mind?

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7. What if I can't decide between two majors?

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Other questions about majors:

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## POSSIBLE MAJORS AND SCHOOLS

**Part I.** Use IHaveAPlanlowa.gov to search for a career you identified in your Interest Inventory. Then look under “What to Learn” to identify related programs. Finally, search for at least one school in your state that offers each program.

**Career** \_\_\_\_\_

Related College & University Programs	Schools with this Program

**Part II.** Next, find one of the majors you identified above from the list of majors on the College Board site: [http://www.collegeboard.com/csearch/majors\\_careers/profiles/](http://www.collegeboard.com/csearch/majors_careers/profiles/). (Click the + signs to expand the categories further to find individual majors.) Read details about that major, then list three “Typical Major Courses” (from the right-hand column) below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Other Educational Paths

### The **BIG** Idea

- What are the benefits and things to consider for various one- and two-year programs, apprenticeships, and the military?

### AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up (5 minutes)
- II. Researching Post-secondary Options (20–25 minutes)
- III. Apprenticeship/Military Focus (10–15 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

### MATERIALS

#### STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 129, Other Options After High School
- Student Handbook pages 130-131, Researching Post-secondary Options
- Student Handbook page 132, Apprenticeship Focus: Becoming an Electrician
- Student Handbook page 133, U.S. Armed Forces Focus: Joining the Army

#### FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, Post- Secondary Options Summaries
- Facilitator Resource 2, Post-secondary Options Websites

- Overhead projector

### OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Recognize that there are multiple paths to similar careers.
- Describe the differences between those paths.
- Compare the job training offered in one- and two-year programs.

## OVERVIEW

Students explore post-secondary educational options other than 4-year colleges: technical and trade programs, community colleges, apprenticeships, and the military. Students discuss what each option offers, its benefits, and things to consider. In addition, they visit websites to answer questions about a specific apprenticeship program and the U.S. Army.

## PREPARATION

- Make arrangements for the class to use the computer lab, and make sure the NAJTC and Army websites are accessible from students' computers.
- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Write the day's vocabulary and definitions on the board.
- For each of your classes, make 10 copies of **Facilitator Resource 1, Post-Secondary Options Summaries** for students to use in **Activity II, Researching Post-secondary Options**.
- Make a class set of **Facilitator Resource 2, Post-secondary Options Websites** to give to students who are interested in pursuing one of these options.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
  - **Student Handbook pages 130-131, Researching Post-Secondary Options**
  - **Student Handbook page 132, Apprenticeship Focus: Becoming an Electrician**
  - **Student Handbook page 133, U.S. Armed Forces Focus: Joining the Army**

The following websites will provide helpful background information when preparing for this lesson, as well as links for students who wish to pursue these options:

### GENERAL

#### **FastWeb: Types of Schools**

<http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/100036?>

#### **Accreditation — Make Sure It's the Real Deal**

<http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/110294>

## **COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

**American Association of Community Colleges (See “About Community Colleges” or “Community College Finder”)**

<http://www.aacc.nche.edu>

**Five Myths About Community Colleges**

<http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/110262?>

## **TECH/TRADE SCHOOLS (CAREER COLLEGES)**

**Fast Web: All About Career Schools**

<http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/104163?>

**Accrediting Council of Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS)**

**(Go to “Accreditation,” then “ACICS Directory of Institutions” to download PDF of accredited schools, which includes career colleges)** <http://www.acics.org>

## **APPRENTICESHIPS**

**U.S. Department of Labor: Benefits for Apprentices (also see “Finding a Program”)**

<http://www.doleta.gov/OA/inbenef.cfm>

**Apprenticeship Training Resources**

<http://www.khake.com/page58.html>

**How to Become an Apprentice**

<http://www.ini.wa.gov/TradesLicensing/Apprenticeship/Become/default.asp>

**Career Voyages: Registered Apprenticeships (find apprenticeships in high-growth industries, then find apprenticeship opportunities in your state)**

<http://www.careervoyages.gov/apprenticeship-main.cfm>

**National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee: Apprenticeship Training (Electrical Industry Careers)**

<http://www.njatc.org/training/apprenticeship/index.aspx>

## **U.S. ARMED FORCES**

**Military.com: Join the Military (see “Benefits,” “Education,” and “Join the Military”)**

<http://www.military.com/>

United States Army: <http://www.goarmy.com>

United States Air Force: <http://www.airforce.com/>

United States Navy: <http://www.navy.com/>

United States Marine Corps: <http://www.marines.com/>

United States Coast Guard: <http://www.gocoastguard.com/>

Army National Guard: <http://www.1800goguard.com/>

Air National Guard: <http://www.goang.com/>

**Army.com: I Want Out (Details about your legal commitment to the military)**

<http://www.army.com/resources/item/886>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION .....

Post-secondary education has become a necessity in today’s workforce. According to America’s Career Resource Network, 48 out of 50 of the fastest-growing jobs in the United States require some sort of education after high school.\* While many students (and parents) perceive traditional four-year colleges as the only legitimate form of higher education, there are many other acceptable and accessible forms of post-secondary education, including community college and career/technical schools. These schools are becoming critical providers of job training, both for degree seekers and for students whose goals are to refine and broaden their skills. For some students, these options may in fact be a better match for reasons ranging from career goals to economics. It is also important to recognize that higher education is a two-way street: schools need to make a decision about whether a student is a good match, but a student also needs to decide whether the school is a good match – they need to “accept” each other.

\* SOURCE: <http://cte.ed.gov/acrn/parents/afterHS.htm>

## VOCABULARY .....

**Accreditation:** official approval of a program after a school has met specific requirements.

**Apprenticeship:** a position in which a recent graduate receives on-the-job training and classroom instruction, sometimes with pay.

**Associate Degree:** a two-year degree, usually earned at a community college.

**Baccalaureate Degree:** a four-year degree from a college or university. Also referred to as a Bachelor's degree.

**Career & Technical School:** a school that provides training in occupational or vocational areas. Many offer technical programs that prepare students for immediate entry into the job market.

**Community College:** two-year colleges that offer a degree after the completion of two years of full-time study.

**Financial Aid:** scholarships, grants, loans, and other assistance programs that help pay for tuition and other post-secondary school expenses.

**Journey Worker:** skilled, certified worker in a trade, craft, or occupation who is recognized by a state or federal agency as fully qualified.

**Licensed:** legally permitted to operate.

**Post-secondary Education:** schooling after high school that includes programs at technical colleges, community colleges, and four-year colleges.

## IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS .....

In the **Warm Up**, you may prefer to introduce the topic, then present **Student Handbook page 129, Other Options After High School**.

## ACTIVITY STEPS

### I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. To begin this lesson, as students enter the classroom, refer them to **Student Handbook page 129, Other Options After High School**. Give students about three minutes to complete the activity.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Welcome, everybody. This week, we're going to continue our unit on Education After High School. In a couple of weeks, we're going to begin re-searching four-year colleges. But before we begin that research, we're going to spend the next two classes looking at other educational options you can pursue after high school. These include one- or two-year programs like community college, tech schools, and trade schools. We're also going to discuss apprenticeships and the military. As we cover this topic, there are a few things I'd like you to keep in mind:
  - Even if you're set on attending four-year college, this might be a viable step on your path to college.
  - If you're not planning on pursuing education after high school, you may end up choosing this path at some point in order to gain critical skills for the workplace.
  - Today, there are many jobs available for people with mid-level skills—skills obtained through one- and two-year programs. This is a path toward many careers.

### II. Researching Post-secondary Options (20-25 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** You often hear about the importance of pursuing education after high school. Well, it's true — as many as 96% of today's fastest-growing jobs require education after high school, or **post-secondary education**. However, this does not necessarily mean you need to go to a traditional four-year school, which is what most people think of when they hear the word "college". Depending on what kind of a career you are considering, the kind of school you need varies. In other words, not all jobs require the same type or amount of education. Some jobs require one- or two-year degrees. Some of these programs typically train you in specific jobs, like computer programming, auto repair, nursing, etc. Others bridge your education between high school and a traditional four-year college or university.
2. Ask students to explain what they know about community college, tech/trade schools, apprenticeships and U.S. Armed forces. Record their answers on chart paper, using a different piece of paper for each option.

3. Assign each student to a group of four.
4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** In a few minutes each of you are going to become an expert about one of the options we just discussed. In this next activity, you are going to work in your groups of four to “jigsaw” a reading about the four options we just discussed. This means that you are going to divide the reading four ways so that each person reads about a different education option. Then each of you will take turns teaching the rest of your group members about the option you read.

You will have seven minutes to independently read your summary and record the most important information onto **Student Handbook pages 130-131, Researching Post-Secondary Options**. Then you will have eight minutes for all four members of your groups to take turns teaching, while their group members take notes on **Student Handbook pages 130-131, Researching Post-Secondary Options**. Any questions?

Give each group one copy of **Facilitator Resource 1, Post-Secondary Options Summaries**. Circulate around the room, assisting any students who need help. After 15 minutes bring the class together and discuss the students’ findings. Make sure to fill in any gaps or missing information.

### III. Apprenticeship/Military Focus (10-15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let’s spend a few minutes on additional strategies for those of you who are considering the military. You may find it helpful to do the following\*:
  - Visit with friends, neighbors, and relatives who have served in various branches of the Armed Forces.
  - Study the military literature available in your counseling office.
  - Evaluate any physical limitations that might prevent you from serving in the Armed Forces.
  - Compare military training opportunities with possible civilian occupations.
  - Arrange with your counselor to visit with various military recruiters during your junior and senior years of high school. When meeting with recruiters, listen very carefully, ask tons of questions, and ask to see all the details in writing.
  - Compare benefits, tours of duty, training, and promotion opportunities of military programs.

\* From “Mapping Your Future: Options After High School” [<http://mappingyourfuture.org/collegeprep/mhscfuture.htm>]

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Note that you may enter the military as an **enlisted** person right out of high school. If you want to enter as a **commissioned officer**, you'll need more training after high school, either through a military school like West Point (which are very competitive) or through an ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) program at the college you attend.
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** For this next activity, you will have a choice of taking a closer look at one of the two following options: apprenticeship or military service. Before you make your decision let's take a look at each one. Please turn to your **Student Handbook page 132, Apprenticeship Focus: Becoming an Electrician**. In this activity, you'll imagine that you are considering a career in the electrical industry. Many skilled electrical workers in the country receive their training through an apprenticeship program provided by the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (NJATC). Apprentices in this program earn money while they're learning valuable skills in the electrical trade.
4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now, let's take a closer look at your second option. Please turn to your **Student Handbook page 133, Apprenticeship Focus: Joining the Army**. In this activity, you'll imagine that you are considering joining the U.S. Army after high school. You'll visit the Army website at [www.goarmy.com](http://www.goarmy.com) and answer the questions.
5. Allow students to complete one of the two Student Handbook pages listed above. Students can work individually or in pairs. After 10 minutes bring the class back together and have a discussion about what they found.

#### IV. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Keep in mind that for many careers, there is no one perfect educational pathway. Often there's more than one way to reach a career goal. For example, say your career goal requires a four-year degree, but you don't have the resources or grades to start at a four-year college. You could get a two-year degree at a community college and then move on to a four-year school. It's a way of getting used to college a little at a time, and can save you money too! While there may be many paths to a career, your job opportunities and salary will increase as you attain more education.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Next week we're going to talk about evaluating some of these options.

## Post-secondary Options Summaries

### I. Community College

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#### What is community college?

- Community colleges typically don't have the strict admissions standards that many four-year colleges do, but you still need to have certain skills to succeed and graduate.
- Almost 50 percent of students who enter community college end up dropping out in the first year. Those who graduate are generally the ones who worked hard in high school.
- Community colleges are run by your city or county.
- Community colleges offer an **Associate's degree** after the completion of two years of full-time study.
- Community college has two main purposes:
  - To train students for immediate entry into the job market. Examples include: bookkeeper, fashion designer, computer programmer, and paramedic.
  - To prepare to transfer to a four-year college or university.

#### What are the benefits?

- You can use a community college as a stepping-stone on the way to a four-year degree.
- May offer evening or weekend classes (allowing students to work while going to school part-time).
- Frequently offers specialized job training (apprenticeships and on-the-job training).
- May be more affordable than a four-year college.
- Location—live at home, save money.
- Small class size and personal attention from professors or instructors.
- Professors focus on teaching—their main job is teaching, not research and publishing. Most have practical experience in the subjects they teach.

#### Things to Consider...

- Make sure your credits will be accepted if you are planning to finish your degree at a four-year school.
- Many students at community colleges do not live on campus, but commute to school instead.
- Research shows students are more likely to graduate from the toughest schools they can get into—graduation rates are better at four-year schools.

Adapted from [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com), "Types of Schools," by Kay Peterson, Ph.D.

## II. Tech/Trade Schools

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### What is a technical/trade school?

- Provide courses that allow you to start a career in a specific field that you enjoy without having to take classes that really don't interest you.
- Offer a variety of options, including two-year Associate's degree programs and one to two year programs from which you earn a license or certificate in a specific skill.
- Offer licenses or certificates in "skilled" careers, such as
  - Auto mechanic
  - Child care worker
  - Computer technician
  - Hairstylist
  - Medical assistant
  - Truck driver
  - Interior decorator
  - Paralegal

### What are the benefits?

- Offer courses that prepare you for a specific career.
- Shorter program length; you begin working soon after graduation.
- Offer an excellent opportunity to gain practical experience in your future trade.
- Small classes and more individual attention.
- Flexible schedule: night and weekend courses for those who work full-time.
- Focuses on students' and employers' needs.

### Things to Consider....

- The quality of the courses can vary; ask about the school's accreditation and reputation.
- This school makes you an expert in only one thing, so it's hard to switch careers.

Adapted from [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com), "Types of Schools," by Kay Peterson, Ph.D.

### III. Apprenticeships

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#### **What is an apprenticeship, and how is it different from other educational opportunities?**

- There are over 850 occupations that provide apprenticeships for careers in skilled trades or crafts. Some examples are:
  - Aircraft mechanic, automotive service technician and mechanic, carpenter, cook, electrician, emergency medical technician (EMT), firefighter, hairdresser, cosmetologist, nurse (licensed practical & licensed vocational nurse), etc.
- Combination of on-the-job training and related classroom instruction under the supervision of a trained professional, during which the apprentice receives practical and theoretical training for a highly skilled career.
- Depending on the occupation, training can last from one to five years.
- During training, the apprentice receives a salary, which increases over time if the apprentice makes satisfactory progress.
- Upon completing the apprenticeship, the worker receives an Apprenticeship Completion Certificate, which is nationally recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor.

#### **What are the benefits?**

- You receive full-time pay while you receive training—and if you do well, your pay will continue to increase.
- You get hands-on experience to learn a skill and see if you really want to do this as a career.
- These highly-skilled occupations typically pay well.
- Certificates may count towards college degrees, other licenses, or certification.
- Certificates are nationally recognized and reflect a high level of training, so you can easily market yourself for a job—anywhere in the country.

#### **Things to Consider....**

- Apprenticeships may require a long time commitment—and often require a lot of work.
- You will spend time in classes and will likely spend a lot of time studying.
- Even though you're getting paid, you may have to cover the cost of tools and textbooks.
- You will be trained in one specific occupation, so you will need new and different training if you want to change careers.
- There is a standard application procedure for an apprenticeship, which typically involves an entrance exam, and an interview. Some can be extremely competitive.
- Applicants are placed on a waiting list in order of their qualifications, which includes test results, past education, grades, and interviews.

## IV. U.S. Armed Forces

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### Description and Requirements:

- The overall mission of the Armed Forces is U.S. security and peace.
- There are five main branches of the U.S. Armed Forces—and each has a unique mission: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corp, and Coast Guard.
- Those who are on active duty are full-time soldiers and sailors.
- There are also the Army National Guard, Air National Guard, and Reserves of different branches—these are for people with civilian jobs who can be called to full-time military duty.

Each branch has its set of requirements, but they all include these:

- You must be a U.S. citizen or resident alien.
- You must be at least 17 years old (17-year old applicants require parental consent).
- You must (with very few exceptions) have a high school diploma.
- You must pass a physical medical exam.

### What are the benefits?

- To serve your country
- To travel to new places
- To learn life skills, like leadership, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline
- To learn specific job skills for the workforce, like computer programming or aircraft repair
- Full-time employment
- Educational benefits (tuition assistance, college fund programs, and special loans)\*
- Other benefits (health care, life insurance, housing)]

\* Educational benefits vary with each branch, so it's important to check with your local military recruiter.

### Things to Consider....

- You need to be comfortable with authority, and respect the authority of higher-ranking people. Once in the military, your job is to implement and enforce policy, and there is little or no room to question that policy.
- You may be deployed far away from home and your family.
- You may be called into combat, and may be killed or injured, or have to kill or injure someone.
- When you enlist in the military, you sign a legal contract to at least an eight-year commitment, which means you may sign up for two years of active duty, but are still committed to six years in the reserves. You cannot simply change your mind and get out.

## Post-secondary Options Websites

### General

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#### **FastWeb: Types of Schools**

<http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/100036?>

#### **Accreditation — Make Sure It's the Real Deal**

<http://resources.monster.com/education/college-accreditation.asp>

### Community Colleges

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#### **American Association of Community Colleges**

(See “About Community Colleges” or “Community College Finder”)

<http://www.aacc.nche.edu>

#### **Five Myths About Community Colleges**

<http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/110262?>

### Tech/Trade Schools (Career Colleges)

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#### **Fast Web: All About Career Schools**

<http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/104163?>

#### **Accrediting Council of Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS)**

(Go to “Accreditation,” then “ACIS Directory of Institutions to download PDF of accredited schools, which includes career colleges) <http://www.acics.org>

### Apprenticeships

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#### **U.S. Department of Labor: Benefits for Apprentices** (also see “Finding a Program”)

<http://www.doleta.gov/OA/inbenef.cfm>

#### **Apprenticeship Training Resources**

<http://www.khake.com/page58.html>

#### **How to Become an Apprentice**

<http://www.lni.wa.gov/TradesLicensing/Apprenticeship/Become/default.asp>

**Career Voyages: Registered Apprenticeships** (find apprenticeships in high-growth industries, then find apprenticeship opportunities in your state)

<http://www.careervoyages.gov/apprenticeship-main.cfm>

**National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee:  
Apprenticeship Training** (Electrical Industry Careers)

<http://www.njatc.org/training/apprenticeship/index.aspx>

## U.S. Armed Forces

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**Military.com: Join the Military** (see “Benefits,” “Education,” and “Join the Military”)

<http://www.military.com/>

United States Army: <http://www.goarmy.com>

United States Air Force: <http://www.airforce.com/>

United States Navy: <http://www.navy.com/>

United States Marine Corps: <http://www.marines.com/>

United States Coast Guard: <http://www.gocoastguard.com/>

Army National Guard: <http://www.1800goguard.com/>

Air National Guard: <http://www.goang.com/>

**Army.com: I Want Out** (Details about your legal commitment to the military)

<http://www.army.com/resources/item/886>

## Other Options After High School

Suppose you want more education after high school, but you do not have the time or resources for a four-year degree.

1. Name two educational options other than a four-year college.

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2. Name a pro and con for each option you listed above.

**Option #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

Pro: \_\_\_\_\_

Con: \_\_\_\_\_

**Option #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

Pro: \_\_\_\_\_

Con: \_\_\_\_\_

## Researching Post-secondary Options

	Community Colleges	Tech/Trade Schools
Description		
Benefits		
Things to Consider		

## Researching Post-secondary Options Cont'd

	Apprenticeships	U.S. Armed Forces
Description		
Benefits		
Things to Consider		

## Apprenticeship Focus: Becoming an Electrician

Imagine you are considering a career in the electrical industry. Many skilled electrical workers in the country receive their training through the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (NJATC). Apprentices in this program earn money while they're learning valuable skills in the electrical trade. Visit the NJATC website about apprenticeship training at: <http://www.njatc.org/training/apprenticeship/index.aspx> for answers to the questions below.

1. Aside from on-the-job-training, how do apprentices learn essential skills and knowledge for electrical careers?

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2. What are the four specialty areas for electrical workers?

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3. What are the requirements for becoming an apprentice in one of the programs?

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4. What are the two sections of the Aptitude Test? (Click **Qualifying Score on an Aptitude Test**, then click **The Application Process** in the left-hand menu.)

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5. Read about the work and training for outside wiremen. (In the window you opened for the previous question, click **Outside Lineman**.) What is one essential area of knowledge and one skill that has been identified for outside wiremen?

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6. Identify one training center in your state. (Return to the first website and scroll to the bottom.)

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## U.S. Armed Forces Focus: Joining the Army

Imagine you are considering joining the U.S. Army after high school. Visit the Army website at [www.goarmy.com](http://www.goarmy.com) for answers to the questions below.

1. What is the main difference between Active Duty and Army Reserve? (Click **About the Army** in the top menu, then **Active Duty & Army Reserve**.)

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2. How long is the length of service for an Active Duty Soldier? How long is a typical deployment?

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3. Name two jobs that are available in the U.S. Army in Transportation and Aviation. (See “Careers and Jobs” in the top menu.)

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4. What is the ASVAB and how will it be used to determine the type of training I get? (See “Learn How to Join” in the right-hand menu.)

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5. What happens at Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS)? What will they test in the physical exam? (See “Learn How to Join” in the right-hand menu.)

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6. What is the G.I. Bill? What do you need to do to receive benefits?

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On the back, write down at least two other questions you would ask your local recruiter.

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## Evaluating Post-secondary Options

### The **BIG** Idea

- What should I consider when evaluating post-secondary education options?

### AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up (5 minutes)
- II. What to Look For (10 minutes)
- III. School Research (25 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

### MATERIALS

#### STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 134, What Do You Want to Know?
- Student Handbook page 135, Resources for School Research
- Student Handbook page 136, Top Tips for Judging Schools
- Student Handbook pages 137-138, School Research

Overhead projector

Chart paper and markers

### OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Examine what questions to ask when applying to a one- or two-year program and where to find the answers.

## OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students discuss the importance and process of evaluating one- and two-year programs, such as community, technical, and career colleges. They begin by writing three questions they would have about one of these programs. Then they discuss the importance of accreditation, and questions to ask when evaluating a school or program. Next, they choose a career from a list and use IHaveAPlanIowa.gov and the Web to research two schools that offer training in that career. Finally, they discuss the challenges they faced and further options for finding the information they need.

## PREPARATION

- Make arrangements for the class to use the computer lab, and make sure IHaveAPlanIowa.gov (or similar website) is accessible from students' computers.
- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Write the day's vocabulary words and definitions on the board.
- The following handout needs to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
  - **Student Handbook page 137-138, School Research**
- For **Activity III**, Item 5, review the website of a community college or tech/trade school in your area.
- The following websites will provide helpful background information when preparing for this lesson:

### INFORMATION ABOUT ACCREDITATION

#### What is Accreditation?

<http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/104246>

- Explains the sometimes-confusing accreditation process.

#### Accreditation—Make Sure It's the Real Deal

<http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/110294>

- Includes questions to ask to make sure your degree will be worth your time and money.

**U.S. Department of Education Database of Accredited Post-secondary Institutions and Programs**

<http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>

- Search for a specific school or program, those accredited by a specific organization, or those in your city or state; includes community colleges and technical and trade programs.

**American Association of Community Colleges**

(See “About Community Colleges” or “Community College Finder”)

<http://www.aacc.nche.edu>

- Accreditation doesn’t seem to be included on this site, so make sure and check this independently (for example, on the U.S. Department of Ed website, above.)

**Accrediting Council of Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS)**

(Go to “Accreditation,” then “ACIS Directory of Institutions to download PDF of accredited schools, which includes career colleges) <http://www.acics.org>

- Download a list of accredited institutions, by state.

**APPRENTICESHIPS**

**U.S. Department of Labor: Apprenticeships: State Offices of Apprenticeship**

<http://www.doleta.gov/OA/stateoffices.cfm>

- Includes addresses and phone numbers, by state.

**CAREER VOYAGES: REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS**

<http://www.careervoyages.gov/apprenticeship-main.cfm>

- Find apprenticeships in high-growth industries, then find apprenticeship opportunities in your state.

## VOCABULARY .....

**Internship/Apprenticeship:** a position in which a recent graduate receives on-the-job training and classroom instruction, sometimes with pay.

**Licensed:** having legal permission to operate.

**Accreditation:** official approval of a program after a school has met specific requirements.

**Financial Aid:** scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study programs that help students pay for tuition and other post-secondary expenses.

## IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS .....

In the **Warm Up**, you may prefer to introduce the topic, then present **Student Handbook page 134, What Do You Want to Know?**

In **Activity III, School Research**, you may wish to replace the school example in Item 5 with one specific to your area.

## ACTIVITY STEPS .....

### I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. As students enter the classroom, refer them to **Student Handbook page 134, What Do You Want To Know?** Give students about three minutes to write down their questions.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Welcome, everybody. Last week, we explored some post-secondary options other than four-year colleges, including community college, tech schools, and trade schools. Today, we're going to examine how to evaluate these options.
3. Have students share some of the questions they listed on **Student Handbook page 134, What Do You Want To Know?** Then ask them to brainstorm some ways they could find answers to these questions.

### II. What to Look For (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** If you choose to attend a community college or tech or trade school, it is extremely important to research the school carefully. The two main questions you'll want to answer about any program you're considering are:
  - Do they offer an appropriate level of training?
  - What are my chances of succeeding there?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** So, how do you know if a school is going to offer the right training and help their students succeed? Luckily, there are ways to check to make sure they meet certain educational standards. You can make sure that the school is licensed or accredited. When a school or program receives accreditation, it has been evaluated by an independent body and its mission and courses have met certain standards. Some schools or programs may be licensed by the state.

To find out if a school or one of its programs is accredited, you can just go online. The U.S. Department of Education provides a database of all accredited schools and programs. [Refer students to **Student Handbook page 135, Resources for School Research.**]

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** This research is also important if you're looking at an apprenticeship. If you're considering this path, make sure that the apprenticeship program is registered and recognized by either your state or the federal government.
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Okay, so you've checked a program or school, and you know

it's accredited. What are some of the ways you could find out more about a program you're interested in? [Look at websites and/or school brochures, talk to school reps, your school counselor, people in the field, and alumni.]

What are some of the questions you could ask to make sure your time and money will be well-spent? [What will you learn? How long is the program? What are the costs? Is financial aid available? Will they help you get a job after graduation?]

Let's take a look at some basic information you'll want to research for a school you're considering. [As a class, go over **Student Handbook page 136, Top Tips for Judging Tech Schools**. Discuss the meaning of any vocabulary that might be new to students, like internship, licensed, accreditation, and financial aid. (See **VOCABULARY**.)]

### III. School Research (25 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now it's your turn to work with a partner to see what you can find out about one- and two-year programs. I'm going to assign you and a partner a career. Then you're going to use IHaveAPlanIowa.gov and the Web to research basic information about two schools that offer training for that career.
2. Have students find a partner, and ask them to turn to **Student Handbook pages 137-138, School Research**. Display this page using an overhead or LCD projector. Explain that they'll use IHaveAPlanIowa.gov to identify two schools that provide training in their assigned career. Then they're going to visit each school's website to find the information listed on their student handbook page.
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Before you begin, I want to let you know that researching information on one- and two-year programs can be extremely challenging. I will not be able to give you step-by-step directions and you may find it frustrating to comb through the websites. When you search for information on four-year colleges and universities, you'll find a wealth of online information about the schools' programs, majors, requirements, etc. But this information is not as readily available for one- and two-year programs. It may take a lot of patience—and searching—to find the information, and there may be some information you can't find at all. If you run into a roadblock and can't find a piece of information you're looking for, don't worry. Just put a question mark in the space.
4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's look at an example together. I'm going to look for schools that provide training to be an electrician.

5. Model how to use IHaveAPlanlowa.gov to find a school in your state that offers training for that career. Using an overhead or LCD projector, record the research you find for each column in the chart on **Student Handbook pages 137-138, School Research**. Instruct students to record this information on their handbook page as they follow along.
  - Use your Account ID name and password to sign on to IHaveAPlanlowa.gov.
  - Click the **Career Planning** tab and then click the **Explore Careers** section.
  - Enter “Electrician” in the **Search for** box.
  - Click **Electrician** for details about that career.
  - Click **What to Learn** and scroll down to the section titled “Education Level”. Is apprenticeship a path for this career? Yes it is, so check **Yes**.
  - Now scroll up to “Beyond High School.” [Point out that there may be different names for similar programs. Therefore, students should investigate each one when they’re searching for programs.]
  - Click **Electrician**, then click **Schools Offering This Program** on the left side of the page. Select **Certificate Programs** and then click **Go** for a list of schools in the state that offer that program. [Explain that students should be recording only two-year and Career & Tech programs (not four-year programs).]
  - Use Northeast Iowa Community College - Calmar as an example. Write “Northeast Iowa Community College-Calmar” in the chart, then point out that it is identified as a two-year program, so you would write “Community College” in the chart.
  - Click on the school name to view its profile, and then click the school’s website, which is posted in the blue box in the center of the screen.
  - Ask students where to find information on the electrician program. They’ll probably figure out that they should click **Programs of Study** in the tan menu bar near the top of the page. They should then scroll down the alphabetical list until they get to the letter “E.” There is no specific Electrician option, but there is an **Electronic Technology** option, which is the only logical choice. Click **Electronic Technology**. Read all of the information on the page. Clicking on the links: **Required Courses, Education Plan, Employment and Wage Data, and NICC College Catalog and Handbook** will give the students additional details about this program.
  - Note that students may need to contact the school for additional information about the program.
  - As time permits, you may want to look for other information, reinforcing that information is difficult to find, and often not available at all.
  
6. Give students about 10 minutes to complete their research. Remind students not to spend too much time searching for one piece of information. If they get stuck, they should write a question mark in the box.

#### IV. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. Come back together as a class and have students share what they learned. What information was difficult (or impossible) to find? Would you apply to this program without knowing these facts? Did you feel that either of the schools you researched would be worth your time and money? Why or why not?
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** So, what do you do if you can't find the information you need? [Take answers from volunteers.] Contact the school directly! Most sites include e-mail address, phone number, and/or a contact page. Typically, they want to hear from prospective students, and will even mail materials to your home.
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** While it may take some extra legwork to research these schools and programs, maybe there's a way we could help each other, and maybe even future classes. What are some things we could do as a class to help each other find this information? [Take suggestions from volunteers. Some suggestions include: Start a library of information for one- and two-year programs. Keep a three-ring binder for one- and two-year programs, including notes from research, e-mails, and informational phone calls.]
4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Great job today, everyone! Next week, we'll turn to a different post-secondary option and begin our research on four-year colleges.

## What Do You Want to Know?

You are interested in pursuing one of the post-secondary options below, but you have important questions to answer before you make up your mind. Remember, you are the consumer—it's your time and money you're about to commit, so you want to make a careful decision. Now, imagine you are sitting across from an admissions officer at a community college or trade school, a potential employer for an apprenticeship, or a military recruiter. What do you want to know before making your decision? First, circle the option you might pursue. Then write down three questions you might have.

### Post-secondary Options:

Community College      Tech/Trade School      Apprenticeship      Military

#### Question 1:

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#### Question 2:

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#### Question 3:

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## RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL RESEARCH

A good school can be hard to find! Here are some resources to help in your search.

### Information about Accreditation

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#### **What is Accreditation?**

<http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/104246>

- Explains the sometimes-confusing accreditation process.

#### **Accreditation—Make Sure It's the Real Deal**

<http://resources.monster.com/education/college-accreditation.asp>

- Includes questions to ask to make sure your degree will be worth your time and money.

#### **U.S. Department of Education Database of Accredited Post-secondary Institutions and Programs**

<http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>

- Search for a specific school or program, those accredited by a specific organization, or those in your city or state; includes community colleges and technical and trade programs.

#### **American Association of Community Colleges**

(See “About Community Colleges” or “Community College Finder”)

<http://www.aacc.nche.edu>

- Search for community colleges by state. We don't see anything about accreditation on this site, so make sure to check this independently using the U.S. Department of Ed website listed above.

#### **Accrediting Council of Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS)**

(Go to “Accreditation,” then “ACIS Directory of Institutions to download PDF of accredited schools, which includes career colleges) <http://www.acics.org>

- Download a list of accredited institutions, by state

### Apprenticeships

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#### **U.S. Department of Labor: Apprenticeships: State Offices of Apprenticeship**

<http://www.doleta.gov/OA/stateoffices.cfm>

- Includes addresses and phone numbers, by state.

#### **Career Voyages: Registered Apprenticeships**

<http://www.careervoyages.gov/apprenticeship-main.cfm>

- Find apprenticeships in high-growth industries, then find apprenticeship opportunities in your state.

## Top Tips for Judging Schools

### 1. Compare programs.

Locate and compare different programs. What courses do you take? Do you graduate with a certificate, a license, or a degree? How long is the program and how much does it cost? How much hands-on experience will you get (including internships and apprenticeships)?

### 2. Find out about other costs.

Will you be required to purchase your own supplies and materials? What is the cost of your tools, equipment, supplies, and books?

### 3. Ask about instructors, classrooms, and equipment.

Tour the campus before enrolling. Check to see if the equipment is up-to-date. Meet some of the instructors and find out about their qualifications.

### 4. Learn about the success rate.

Ask what percentage of their students graduate and find jobs. What kind of jobs do they get? Ask to be put in touch with some recent graduates to get their perspective on the training they received.

### 5. Find out if there's financial aid.

Does the school offer financial aid? Can government financial aid be used?

### 6. See if the school's licensed and accredited.

Find out if the school is licensed (usually done by a state agency). Also look for accreditation, which is usually done through a private agency or association.

### 7. Do a background check.

See if the school has had any complaints against it. Check with the Better Business Bureau and your state's Attorney General's office. Verify that the school has a good reputation when you speak with potential employers or those already in the field.

Adapted from [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com), "Do Your Homework Before You Enroll," by Stephen Borkowski

## School Research

Check the box in front of the career you're investigating.

<input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Assistant	<input type="checkbox"/> Computer Programmer	<input type="checkbox"/> Paramedic
<input type="checkbox"/> Automobile Mechanic	<input type="checkbox"/> Dental Hygienist	<input type="checkbox"/> Interior designer
<input type="checkbox"/> Chef	<input type="checkbox"/> Paralegal	<input type="checkbox"/> Truck Driver

Then use [IHaveAPlanlowa.gov](http://IHaveAPlanlowa.gov) to identify and learn about two schools that offer training in that program:

- 1) Go to [IHaveAPlanlowa.gov](http://IHaveAPlanlowa.gov) ([www.IHaveAPlanlowa.gov](http://www.IHaveAPlanlowa.gov)) and search for the career you selected by clicking the **Career Planning** tab and then the **Explore Careers** section. Type the career name into the **Search for** box and click **Go!**
- 2) Click **What to Learn** and read the third section, titled "Education Level". Is apprenticeship a path for this career?  
 Yes  No
- 3) Click the most appropriate category under "Beyond High School," then click on a program. Click the **Schools Offering This Program** tab. Select **Certificate Program** or **Associate Degree** (you may need to try both). Then click **Go**. Write down two schools that offer the program. (If no schools appear on the list, you may need to go back to the "What to Learn" page of the career profile and select another program listed under "Beyond High School".) Include only two-year and Career & Tech programs on the chart on **Student Handbook page 138**.
- 4) Visit the websites for each school and record the information you can find. If you cannot find the information, write a question mark on the chart (**Student Handbook page 138**).
- 5) When you're done, return to the [IHaveAPlanlowa.gov](http://IHaveAPlanlowa.gov) site for that career and click **Other Resources**. On the back of this page, write the names of at least two resources you could contact for more information.

Name of Career: \_\_\_\_\_

School Name	Community College or Tech School	Program and Degree Offered	Sample Courses	Tuition/ Financial Aid	Accreditation (yes/no)	Contact (phone / e-mail)

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## Choosing a College

### The **BIG** Idea

- How can I identify colleges to consider for education after high school?

### AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: My Dream School  
(5 minutes)
- II. Safety, Match, Reach: College Search Vocabulary (5 minutes)
- III. Online College Search  
(25 minutes)
- IV. My Calendar of Deadlines  
(5 minutes)
- V. Wrap Up: All Aboard?  
(5 minutes)

### OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Learn about reach, match, and safety schools.
- Explore the School Finder Tool in IHaveAPlanIowa.gov.
- Develop a “Top Ten” list of colleges.
- Order materials from these schools to be mailed home.

### MATERIALS

#### PORTFOLIO PAGES:

- Portfolio page 12, List of Top Ten Schools
- Portfolio pages 13 - 22, My Top Ten Schools

#### STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 139, My Dream School
- Student Handbook pages 140-142, School Finder College Search Steps
- Student Handbook page 143, Calendar of Deadlines

#### FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, Safety, Match, Reach: College Search Vocabulary

#### Overhead and/or LCD projector

## OVERVIEW .....

As students near the end of 11<sup>th</sup> grade, it's time to start zeroing in on some realistic college choices, and identifying schools that might be "a good fit". This lesson, and the three that follow, will help students do this. Key to the process is personal assessment and college research. Students must evaluate career goals, think about lifestyle preferences, assess academic standing, factor in finances, research schools, and compare the results. Luckily, this process can be streamlined by using an online college search tool.

In this lesson, students go online to IHaveAPlanIowa.gov and complete the School Finder tool. They identify approximately ten schools that make up a good personal list of reach, match, and safety schools. They will order informational materials from these schools. In addition, they will review a list of suggested steps for junior and senior years.

## PREPARATION .....

- Talk to the school counselor and collaborate on ways to facilitate the process of choosing colleges.
- If, during the course of facilitating these lessons, you encounter questions you can't answer, please consult your school counselor to make sure you're providing the most accurate and up-to-date information.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
  - **Facilitator Resource 1, Safety, Match, Reach: College Search Vocabulary**
  - **Student Handbook page 143, Calendar of Deadlines**
  - **Student Handbook pages 140-142, School Finder College Search Steps**
  - **Portfolio pages 13 - 22, My Top Ten Schools**

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION .....

Developing a realistic list of college choices sounds easier than it is. There are many factors to consider, and it takes time, effort and research, and the process involves a personal honesty and self-awareness that may not be comfortable or familiar. But ultimately, it's empowering for students to think about who they are and what they want, and to develop a list of schools that will be right for *them*.

## VOCABULARY .....

**Safety School:** a school where you'll almost surely be accepted because your grades and exam scores are higher than the requirements.

**Match School:** a school where you think you'd be happy academically and socially, and where you fall into the middle of their GPA and ACT/SAT score range.

**Reach School:** a top choice or "dream" school that is less likely to accept you because it is highly competitive and/or because your academics are just equal to, or fall short of, the school's requirements.

## IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS .....

For the remainder of the unit, students considering tech and trade schools may continue to research these options. Encourage students considering these post-secondary choices to research community colleges or four-year schools in their field of interest if there is any chance they may go to these types of schools. Students considering entering the military should compare this choice with civilian options.

There may not be as much information readily available for tech and trade schools, so students considering these choices need to be proactive, making phone calls to gather information they need to make decisions. If you can enlist the help of your school counselor or host teacher to assist in troubleshooting these issues as students work independently, that would be helpful.

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

## ACTIVITY STEPS

### I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. As students enter, direct them to **Student Handbook page 139, My Dream School**. Give them 2 to 3 minutes to answer the questions.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** How many of you found it easy to imagine yourself in college, and picture the details of that dream school? [Students respond.] And how many of you thought, “Um, ah, gee, well...I really don’t have a clue!” [Students respond, probably in the majority.] Well, if you were in the “um, er, well, I dunno” group, you’re probably in the majority. Most juniors don’t know where they’ll end up after high school, and find it hard to visualize their future. And even if you do have a dream school, after taking everything into consideration, it might not be where you end up wanting to go. So today we’re going to look at some of the factors that will help you decide where to apply.

### II. Safety, Match, Reach: College Search Vocabulary (5 minutes)

1. Place the transparency of **Facilitator Resource 1, Safety, Match, Reach: College Search Vocabulary** on the overhead projector.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** In a moment we’ll go to a website where you’ll answer a questionnaire to help focus your college search, and develop a list of prospective schools. But first, let’s look at the three different categories of schools you should end up with on your list. They’re called safety, match, and reach schools. Let’s start with “safety.” What’s a **safety school**?

[Ask a student to read aloud the definition for **safety school**.]

Okay, so a safety school is one where you’re almost certain to be admitted, based on your current GPA and the scores of any standardized college exams you’ve already taken.

[Ask a student to read aloud the definition for **match school**.]

That’s right. A match school is one where you feel you’d fit in, and you fall into the middle of their GPA and ACT/SAT score range, so there’s a good chance you’ll be accepted.

[Ask a student to read aloud the definition for **reach school**.]

Okay, so a reach school is a big “maybe”—worth reaching for, because you’re passionate about applying to that particular school, or because you might end up boosting your grades and scores before applying and it’s worth a try.

### III. Online College Search (25 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now let’s go to [IHaveAPlanlowa.gov](http://IHaveAPlanlowa.gov). We’ll be using the School Finder. This is a tool that will help you develop a list of school choices. You will be able to evaluate the schools on this list to see which ones are safety, match, and reach schools. It’s a little like “E-Harmony,” except you end up with a list of possible colleges...instead of a list of possible dates!
2. Write [www.IHaveAPlanlowa.gov](http://www.IHaveAPlanlowa.gov) on the board, and tell students to go to the site. As they are finding it, explain that in addition to generating a list of schools they can print out and take home, [IHaveAPlanlowa.gov](http://IHaveAPlanlowa.gov) will give them the option to click on individual college websites, where they can request information to be mailed to them at home.
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** We’ll go through the basic part of the School Finder together, step by step, but please know that you have the same information on **Student Handbook page 140 - 142, School Finder Steps**, so if you get lost or want to move ahead more quickly, you can use that as your guide. Raise your hand if you need more time to find the website. [Wait if necessary.] Okay, let’s begin.

First, you should sign in to [IHaveAPlanlowa.gov](http://IHaveAPlanlowa.gov) by entering your Account ID and password. Next, click on the **College Planning** tab and then on the **Explore Post-secondary Schools** section. Click on the **School Finder** tool. You’ll find this under the heading School Exploration Tools.

Along the left side of the page you will see the heading Choose Characteristics. There are eight categories you can choose to answer questions about: Key Facts, Admissions, Costs and Financial Aid, Academics, Student Body, Sports, Campus Life and Services, and Career Connect. You can select criteria from any category that interests you. We’ll start out by selecting a few criteria, together.

Let’s start by choosing criteria about **Location**. You’ll find this in the first category, titled Key Facts. You can check off as many items as you want. You may wish to select certain states, like Iowa, or you may wish to choose an entire region, like the Midwest. If

you choose many states or a region, you are likely to get a larger number of college matches than you will if you choose a single state.

Please check off the states or regions that interest you now.

Next, we're going to consider the second criteria. Click on **School Type**. If you want to go to a technical or trade school, check the box next to Vocational or Technical programs. If you want to go to a two-year college, check the box next to Associate degree programs, and if you want to go to a four-year college, check the box next to Bachelor's degree programs.

Let's look at the other types of criteria that you can select under key facts. These criteria are Public/Private, School Setting, School Size, Academic Calendar, and Historically Black. Some of these criteria may be important to you. For example, you may really want to attend college in a major city or alternatively, you may want to attend college in a rural area. If this is important to you, you should click **School Setting** from the list of criteria and check off the setting that you are interested in. On the other hand, you may not have a preference as to whether your school is Public or Private. If you don't have a preference in that area, you don't need to click on **Public/Private** and select a criteria.

I'm going to give you a few minutes to select any other criteria under Key Facts that are important to you and to check off your selections.

[Circulate to make sure everyone's comfortable with the process.]

The next section is labeled Admissions. There are a number of criteria that you can choose in this section. Let's start out by clicking on **GPA**. Choose the GPA range that your own GPA falls within.

**Remember the scale:**

4.0 = A

3.0 = B

2.0 = C

1.0 = D

After we have finished the examples, you can go back and select other criteria under Admissions, if any other criteria are important to you.

The next section is called Costs and Financial Aid. You might not want to limit your school search based on costs at this stage. Financial aid may put expensive schools within your reach. It's a good strategy to apply to several schools that vary in cost, so that if you don't get the financial aid you'd planned on, you have a less expensive Plan B.

Now let's look at the section called Academics. Click on the link for **Programs/Majors** offered. Click the **Show Programs** button next to your favorite Career Cluster or Clusters. Check the box next to any programs that you are interested in. At the bottom of the page, make sure you select Search for ANY. This will search for schools that offer at least one of your majors.

Now I'm going to give you a few minutes to choose any of the other criteria from your list that are important to you. Remember, the more criteria you choose the shorter, or more focused, your list will tend to be. Raise your hand if you have any questions.

[Circulate around the room and assist students as needed.]

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** When you are finished selecting your criteria, scroll to the bottom of the criteria list. The last item says Save your current search as:. Enter a name for this search in the box below, and then click on the **Save your current search as:** link. Now this search is saved and you will be able to access it at any time from your portfolio. You can also create new searches at any time.

For now, click the link in the center of the page that says **View schools based on the characteristics you chose.** This will show you the list of schools that match the criteria that you selected.

Don't worry if you don't recognize all the schools on your list. If there is a school that you really love that didn't come up in your results list, you can still research it. But make sure to stay open minded; a school you've never heard of could be the perfect fit for your interests and career goals.

Make sure everyone is with you now, following along. Then instruct students to record their top 10 choices on **Portfolio page 12, List of Top Ten Schools.** NOTE: Students can also list five schools from their list and five other schools that they are interested in researching.

Then have students turn to **Portfolio pages 13-22, My Top Ten Schools**. Instruct students to record the name of each college along with the info listed under the General Info box (top left). The information in this box can be found within each school profile. Students will need to click the tabs on the left side of the page to find the information.

Circulate and make sure everyone is printing out, or hand-writing, their list. If there are any students whose search did not generate a list, or who did not get at least ten schools, suggest they return to the survey later and request more general selections so that more schools will be included. Remind students that they will fill in the remaining information in the upcoming weeks.

If time permits have students request free information from their top schools. For each school they will need to click on the Admissions tab on the school profile. This page will generally provide a contact e-mail for students requesting information from the office of admissions.

4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Whenever you log into the IHaveAPlanIowa.gov website, you can click on **College Planning** and then on **Explore Post-secondary Schools**. If you click on **School Finder**, you will see a list of any searches that you have saved in the box on the right labeled, Saved Searches. Just click on the name of any search, and your schools will come up.
5. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** You've all done a great job today thinking about your future and coming up with a list of potential schools. If any of you feel you weren't quite ready to make some of the decisions on the questionnaire, spend some time this week thinking about the basics: two- or four-year school, close to home or farther away, big or small campus, what you might be interested in studying. Then go back to the IHaveAPlanIowa.gov site, and do a new college search. See what comes up!

You can go through this process as many times as you like; no one will see your investigations, and the process of thinking about the future will ultimately help you pursue, and reach, your goals. If any of you feel ready to identify your top school choices, spend some time this week browsing the schools' websites, getting to know them better. And in a day or so, start checking your mail! Read the pamphlets you get from the colleges you e-mailed today, and see if you can imagine yourself there. Eventually, I promise, you *will* find a school that's just right for you.

#### **IV. Wrap Up: My Calendar of Deadlines (5 minutes)**

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Great job completing the IHaveAPlanIowa.gov School Finder. Take the list home, share it with your parents, and bring it to class next week. During that lesson, you'll explore the schools you selected in greater detail.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now, turn to **Student Handbook page 143, Calendar of Deadlines**. This list will help you organize for the rest of junior and senior year. Take a quick glance at it, as I read the points aloud.
3. Read the calendar aloud. Field questions.

## Safety, Match, Reach College Search Vocabulary

**Safety School:** a school where you'll almost surely be accepted because your grades and exam scores are higher than the requirements.

**Match School:** a school where you think you'd be happy academically and socially, and where you fall into the middle of their GPA (grades) and ACT/SAT (standardized test) score range.

**Reach School:** a top choice or "dream" school that is less likely to accept you because it is highly competitive and/or because your academics are just equal to, or fall short of, the school's requirements.

## My Dream School

Imagine you have a crystal ball and you can see into the future. You can see yourself after high school, enrolled at a college or school of higher education that is perfect for you. It has the right academics or training program, it's in the right setting, the other students are people you like, and the social, cultural, and/or sports activities are just what you want.

Describe the following about your dream school:

1. The setting (i.e. state or geographic region, city vs. country, big or small campus).

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2. The subjects you're studying (i.e. nursing, mechanical engineering, liberal arts).

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3. The other students (i.e. friendly, competitive, international, like/unlike me).

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4. Social/cultural or sports events you'll go to this weekend (i.e. bluegrass concert, school dance, basketball game, pick-up game of dodge ball, art show).

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## School Finder College Search Steps IHaveAPlanlowa.gov

### 1. CONNECTING TO IHaveAPlanlowa.gov

- Turn on the computer.
- Click on the icon that connects to the Internet (Internet Explorer, Mozilla, Firefox, etc).
- Type the web address into the dialog box ([www.IHaveAPlanlowa.gov](http://www.IHaveAPlanlowa.gov)).
- When the IHaveAPlanlowa.gov home page appears enter your Account ID and password into the sign in area on the right side of the screen.

### 2. SCHOOL FINDER

- Now, click on the **College Planning** tab on the top of the screen and then click on **Explore Post-secondary Schools**.
- Under the section titled School Exploration Tools, click on the **School Finder**.
- Select criteria that are important to you from beneath each of the eight headings. The eight headings are: Key Facts, Admissions, Costs and Financial Aid, Academics, Student Body, Sports, Campus Life and Services, and Career Connect.
- In today's lesson, you will be using the following criteria:
  - ♦ **Location** (found under the Key Facts heading): Click the link for Location. You can check off as many locations as you want. You may wish to select certain states, like Iowa, or you may wish to choose an entire region, like the Midwest. If you choose many states or a region, you are likely to get a larger number of college matches that you will if you choose a single state.
  - ♦ **School Type** (found under the Key Facts heading): Click on School Type. If you want to go to a technical or trade school, check the box next to Vocational or Technical programs. If you want to go to a two-year college, check the box next to Associate degree programs, and if you want to go to a four-year college, check the box next to Bachelor's degree programs.
  - ♦ Select any other criteria under Key Facts that are important to you and to check off your selections.
  - ♦ **GPA** (found under the Admissions heading): Click on GPA. Choose the GPA range that your own GPA falls within.

Remember the scale:

4.0 = A

3.0 = B

2.0 = C

1.0 = D

- ♦ Select any other criteria under Admissions that are important to you.
- ♦ **Costs and Financial Aid:** Although you can select from any of the listed criteria, you might not want to limit your school search based on costs at this stage. Financial aid may put expensive schools within your reach. It's a good strategy to apply to several schools that vary in cost, so that if you don't get the financial aid you'd planned on, you have a less expensive Plan B.
- ♦ **Programs/Majors Offered** (found under the Academics heading): Click on the link for **Programs/Majors Offered**. Click the **Show Programs** button next to your favorite Career Cluster or Clusters. Check the box next to any programs that you are interested in. At the bottom of the page, make sure you select **Search for ANY**. This will search for schools that offer at least one of your majors.
- Now, choose any of the other criteria from the list that are important to you. Remember, the more criteria you choose the shorter, or more focused, your list will tend to be

### 3. SAVING SEARCHES

- When you are finished selecting your criteria, scroll to the bottom of the criteria list.
- The last item says Save your current search as: Enter a name for this search in the box below, and then click on **Save your current search as:**.
- Now this search is saved and you will be able to access it at any time from your portfolio. You can also create new searches at any time.

### 4. YOUR RESULTS

- Access your list of schools by clicking on **View schools based on the characteristics you chose**. This is found in the center of the page that appears after you have saved your search. Alternatively, you can click on the name that you saved your search under in the Saved Searches box
- A list of schools matching your criteria will appear.
- Print your list of schools by clicking **Print This** in the upper right corner of the page, or record your top ten school choices on **Portfolio page 12, List of Top Ten Schools**. If there are schools that interest you that were not in your results, feel free to add them to your list.

At least five schools need to come from your School Finder results.

- Turn to **Portfolio pages 13-22, My Top Ten Schools**. Record the name of each college along with the info listed under the General Info box (top left). The information in this box can be found within each school profile. You will need to click the tabs on the left side of the page to find the information.
- Whenever you sign into the IHaveAPlanIowa.gov website, you can click on **College Planning** and then on **Explore Post-secondary Schools**. If you click on **School Finder**, you will see a list of any searches that you have saved in the box on the right labeled, Saved Searches. Just click on the name of any search, and your schools will come up.

## Calendar of Deadlines

### Junior Year

- Identify your top ten college choices: three safety, three match, three reach schools (plus one extra). Get information and application materials mailed to you at home.
- Take the ACT or SAT, and any other tests required for admission.
- If possible, visit your top college choices.
- About 400 colleges across the country offer the chance to apply early. If you already know where you want to go to school, talk to your school counselor about Early Action or Early Decision options. (See [www.collegeboard.com/student/apply/the-application/104.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/apply/the-application/104.html) for details. And start working on your application this summer.)
- Ask teachers, counselors, or employers for letters of recommendation. Explain your goals and ambitions so they'll be more prepared to write about you. Check your application for the number of recommendations the school requires.

### Senior Year

- Continue to visit schools.
- Finalize your college list.
- Stay on track with your grades and extracurricular activities.
- Take standardized tests if necessary.
- Make a calendar showing the application deadlines for admission, financial aid, and scholarships for your choice schools.
- Complete applications. Make sure you and your school's guidance office have sent all necessary materials, including test scores, recommendations, transcripts, and essays. Send in all of your materials early to make sure there is plenty of time to meet each school's application deadline.

For details, go to the [IHaveAPlanlowa.gov](http://IHaveAPlanlowa.gov) College Planning Timeline. This is found under the **College Planning** tab in the **Prepare for College** section.

## List of Top Ten Schools

IHaveAPlanlowa.gov Account ID: \_\_\_\_\_

IHaveAPlanlowa.gov Password: \_\_\_\_\_

## My Top Ten Schools

**Directions:** Record your top ten school choices from your School Finder results page. If there are schools that interest you that were not in your results, feel free to add them to your list. Just make sure that at least five schools are from your School Finder list.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

## 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 combined (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mid-50% ACT (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Costs and Financial Aid tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Website: \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Info**  
GPA:  
 3.75+ \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.5 – 3.74 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.25- 3.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.0 – 3.24 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.5 – 2.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.0 – 2.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 1.0– 1.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 below 1.0 \_\_\_\_\_  
Class rank: Important?  
 Top tenth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top quarter \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom quarter \_\_\_\_\_

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

<p><b>Academics (Academics tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majors</li> <li>• Faculty</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Student Population (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Percent of Freshmen who live in school housing</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Campus Facilities (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living on Campus (Dorms information)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Campus Life (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracurricular Activities/Student Organizations</li> <li>• Fraternity/Sorority</li> <li>• Athletics</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Off-Campus Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things to Do (At a Glance tab, Campus Summary)</li> <li>• Transportation (Student Life tab, Getting Away)</li> </ul>	

**Is this school for me?**     Probably not     Maybe     Definitely

## 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 combined (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mid-50% ACT (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Costs and Financial Aid tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Website: \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Info**  
GPA:  
 3.75+ \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.5 – 3.74 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.25- 3.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.0 – 3.24 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.5 – 2.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.0 – 2.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 1.0– 1.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 below 1.0 \_\_\_\_\_  
Class rank: Important?  
 Top tenth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top quarter \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom quarter \_\_\_\_\_

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

<b>Academics (Academics tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Majors</li><li>• Faculty</li></ul>	
<b>Student Population (Student Life tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diversity</li><li>• Percent of Freshmen who live in school housing</li></ul>	
<b>Campus Facilities (Student Life tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Living on Campus (Dorms information)</li></ul>	
<b>Campus Life (Student Life tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extracurricular Activities/Student Organizations</li><li>• Fraternity/Sorority</li><li>• Athletics</li></ul>	
<b>Off-Campus Community</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Things to Do (At a Glance tab, Campus Summary)</li><li>• Transportation (Student Life tab, Getting Away)</li></ul>	

**Is this school for me?**     Probably not     Maybe     Definitely

## 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 combined (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mid-50% ACT (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Costs and Financial Aid tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Website: \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Info**  
GPA:  
 3.75+ \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.5 – 3.74 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.25- 3.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.0 – 3.24 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.5 – 2.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.0 – 2.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 1.0– 1.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 below 1.0 \_\_\_\_\_  
Class rank: Important?  
 Top tenth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top quarter \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom quarter \_\_\_\_\_

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

<p><b>Academics (Academics tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majors</li> <li>• Faculty</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Student Population (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Percent of Freshmen who live in school housing</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Campus Facilities (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living on Campus (Dorms information)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Campus Life (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracurricular Activities/Student Organizations</li> <li>• Fraternity/Sorority</li> <li>• Athletics</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Off-Campus Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things to Do (At a Glance tab, Campus Summary)</li> <li>• Transportation (Student Life tab, Getting Away)</li> </ul>	

**Is this school for me?**     Probably not     Maybe     Definitely

# 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 combined (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mid-50% ACT (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Costs and Financial Aid tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Website: \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Info**  
GPA:  
 3.75+ \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.5 – 3.74 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.25- 3.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.0 – 3.24 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.5 – 2.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.0 – 2.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 1.0– 1.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 below 1.0 \_\_\_\_\_  
Class rank: Important?  
 Top tenth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top quarter \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom quarter \_\_\_\_\_

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

<p><b>Academics (Academics tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majors</li> <li>• Faculty</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Student Population (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Percent of Freshmen who live in school housing</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Campus Facilities (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living on Campus (Dorms information)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Campus Life (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracurricular Activities/Student Organizations</li> <li>• Fraternity/Sorority</li> <li>• Athletics</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Off-Campus Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things to Do (At a Glance tab, Campus Summary)</li> <li>• Transportation (Student Life tab, Getting Away)</li> </ul>	

**Is this school for me?**     Probably not     Maybe     Definitely

## 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 combined (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mid-50% ACT (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Costs and Financial Aid tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Website: \_\_\_\_\_

### Academic Info

GPA: \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.75+ \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.5 – 3.74 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.25- 3.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.0 – 3.24 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.5 – 2.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.0 – 2.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 1.0– 1.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 below 1.0 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Class rank: Important? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top tenth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top quarter \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom quarter \_\_\_\_\_

### Academic match?

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

<b>Academics (Academics tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majors</li> <li>• Faculty</li> </ul>	
<b>Student Population (Student Life tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Percent of Freshmen who live in school housing</li> </ul>	
<b>Campus Facilities (Student Life tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living on Campus (Dorms information)</li> </ul>	
<b>Campus Life (Student Life tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracurricular Activities/Student Organizations</li> <li>• Fraternity/Sorority</li> <li>• Athletics</li> </ul>	
<b>Off-Campus Community</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things to Do (At a Glance tab, Campus Summary)</li> <li>• Transportation (Student Life tab, Getting Away)</li> </ul>	

Is this school for me?    Probably not    Maybe    Definitely

# MY TOP TEN SCHOOLS

Name of College \_\_\_\_\_

**My Info**  
 My GPA: \_\_\_\_\_  
 My Class Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 My ACT score: \_\_\_\_\_  
 My SAT score: \_\_\_\_\_

**General Info** (from IHaveAPlanlowa.gov)  
 Location (At A Glance tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Enrollment (At A Glance tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mid-50% SAT combined (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mid-50% ACT (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Costs and Financial Aid tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Website: \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Info**  
GPA:  
 3.75+ \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.5 – 3.74 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.25- 3.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.0 – 3.24 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.5 – 2.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.0 – 2.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 1.0– 1.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 below 1.0 \_\_\_\_\_  
Class rank: Important?  
 Top tenth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top quarter \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom quarter \_\_\_\_\_

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

<p><b>Academics (Academics tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majors</li> <li>• Faculty</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Student Population (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Percent of Freshmen who live in school housing</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Campus Facilities (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living on Campus (Dorms information)</li> </ul>	
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<p><b>Off-Campus Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things to Do (At a Glance tab, Campus Summary)</li> <li>• Transportation (Student Life tab, Getting Away)</li> </ul>	

**Is this school for me?**     Probably not     Maybe     Definitely

## 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 combined (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mid-50% ACT (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Costs and Financial Aid tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Website: \_\_\_\_\_

### Academic Info

GPA: \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.75+ \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.5 – 3.74 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.25- 3.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.0 – 3.24 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.5 – 2.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.0 – 2.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 1.0– 1.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 below 1.0 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Class rank: Important? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top tenth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top quarter \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom quarter \_\_\_\_\_

### Academic match?

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

<b>Academics (Academics tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majors</li> <li>• Faculty</li> </ul>	
<b>Student Population (Student Life tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Percent of Freshmen who live in school housing</li> </ul>	
<b>Campus Facilities (Student Life tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living on Campus (Dorms information)</li> </ul>	
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Is this school for me?    Probably not    Maybe    Definitely

## 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 combined (Admissions tab):  
Mid-50% ACT (Admissions tab):  
Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab):  
Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Costs and Financial Aid tab):  
Website:

### Academic Info

GPA:  
3.75+ \_\_\_\_\_  
3.5 – 3.74 \_\_\_\_\_  
3.25- 3.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
3.0 – 3.24 \_\_\_\_\_  
2.5 – 2.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
2.0 – 2.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
1.0– 1.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
below 1.0 \_\_\_\_\_  
Class rank: Important? \_\_\_\_\_  
Top tenth \_\_\_\_\_  
Top quarter \_\_\_\_\_  
Top half \_\_\_\_\_  
Bottom half \_\_\_\_\_  
Bottom quarter \_\_\_\_\_

### Academic match?

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

<b>Academics (Academics tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majors</li> <li>• Faculty</li> </ul>	
<b>Student Population (Student Life tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Percent of Freshmen who live in school housing</li> </ul>	
<b>Campus Facilities (Student Life tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living on Campus (Dorms information)</li> </ul>	
<b>Campus Life (Student Life tab)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracurricular Activities/Student Organizations</li> <li>• Fraternity/Sorority</li> <li>• Athletics</li> </ul>	
<b>Off-Campus Community</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things to Do (At a Glance tab, Campus Summary)</li> <li>• Transportation (Student Life tab, Getting Away)</li> </ul>	

Is this school for me?  Probably not  Maybe  Definitely

## 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 combined (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mid-50% ACT (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Costs and Financial Aid tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Website: \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Info**  
**GPA:**  
 3.75+ \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.5 – 3.74 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.25- 3.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.0 – 3.24 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.5 – 2.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.0 – 2.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 1.0– 1.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 below 1.0 \_\_\_\_\_  
**Class rank: Important?**  
 Top tenth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top quarter \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom quarter \_\_\_\_\_

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

<p><b>Academics (Academics tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majors</li> <li>• Faculty</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Student Population (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Percent of Freshmen who live in school housing</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Campus Facilities (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living on Campus (Dorms information)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Campus Life (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracurricular Activities/Student Organizations</li> <li>• Fraternity/Sorority</li> <li>• Athletics</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Off-Campus Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things to Do (At a Glance tab, Campus Summary)</li> <li>• Transportation (Student Life tab, Getting Away)</li> </ul>	

**Is this school for me?**     Probably not     Maybe     Definitely

## 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 combined (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mid-50% ACT (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Costs and Financial Aid tab): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Website: \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Info**  
**GPA:**  
 3.75+ \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.5 – 3.74 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.25- 3.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3.0 – 3.24 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.5 – 2.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2.0 – 2.49 \_\_\_\_\_  
 1.0– 1.99 \_\_\_\_\_  
 below 1.0 \_\_\_\_\_  
**Class rank: Important?**  
 Top tenth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top quarter \_\_\_\_\_  
 Top half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom half \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bottom quarter \_\_\_\_\_

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

<p><b>Academics (Academics tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majors</li> <li>• Faculty</li> </ul>	
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**Is this school for me?**     Probably not     Maybe     Definitely

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## 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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 \_\_\_\_\_

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><b>Academics (Academics tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majors</li> <li>• Faculty</li> </ul>	<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><b>Student Population (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Percent of Freshmen who live in school housing</li> </ul>	<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><b>Campus Facilities (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living on Campus (Dorms information)</li> </ul>	<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><b>Campus Life (Student Life tab)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracurricular Activities/Student Organizations</li> <li>• Fraternity/Sorority</li> <li>• Athletics</li> </ul>	<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><b>Off-Campus Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things to Do (At a Glance tab, Campus Summary)</li> <li>• Transportation (Student Life tab, Getting Away)</li> </ul>	<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><b>Is this school for me?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Probably not <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely <span style="float: right;">Your Opinion Here</span></p>	

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## Research II

### The **BIG** Idea

- What financial aid options exist, and what can I do to prepare to apply for financial aid?

### AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: Financial Aid and FAFSA Review (10 minutes)
- II. College Research Continues (30 minutes)
- III. Wrap Up: Research Review (5 minutes)

### MATERIALS

#### PORTFOLIO PAGES:

- Portfolio pages 13-22, My Top Ten Schools (from Ed After HS 5)

#### STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 146, Financial Aid 411
- Student Handbook page 145, My Top Ten School Tips (from previous lesson)

#### FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, Need vs. Merit-Based Financial Aid

#### Overhead projector

#### Laptop and LCD projector

### OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Review financial aid options and understand the role of the FAFSA in obtaining financial aid.
- Know where to go to obtain scholarship information.
- Continue to research college websites and catalogs to find out more about student population, facilities, academics, campus life, and off-campus community.

## OVERVIEW .....

This lesson begins with a review of financial aid options, and describes the role of the FAFSA in obtaining needs-based aid. For the remainder of the lesson, students continue to research colleges on their lists. Students begin to identify which colleges are probably not a good match and which ones remain under consideration. At the conclusion of the lesson, students discuss their research findings.

## PREPARATION .....

- Make arrangements for students to use the computer lab.
- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- The following handouts need to be made into an overhead transparency or copied onto chart paper.
  - **Student Handbook page 146, Financial Aid 411**
  - **Facilitator Resource 1, Need vs. Merit-Based Financial Aid**
- Tell students to bring in the college catalogs, applications, and other materials that they've received in the mail.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION .....

College is expensive. The average college costs (tuition and fees) for 2007-2008 were as follows:

- Private four-year schools: \$25,143
- Public four-year schools: \$6,585
- Public two-year schools: \$2,402

Help is available. In 2007-2008, the federal government provided \$83 billion in grants, work-study, and low-interest loans. About 2/3 of all full-time undergraduate students receive grant aid.

SOURCES: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org), <http://studentaid.ed.gov>

The key to obtaining needs-based aid is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The federal government, state governments, and individual colleges and universities use the FAFSA to determine student need.

Students wishing to apply for merit-based financial aid must conduct a separate search for scholarships. This lesson provides a brief review of needs-based and merit-based aid.

## VOCABULARY .....

**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.

**Financial Aid:** scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study programs that help pay for tuition and other post-secondary school expenses.

**Grant:** also called gift aid, a grant is financial aid that doesn't have to be repaid. Grant aid comes from federal and state governments and from individual colleges, usually on the basis of financial need.

**Loan:** financial aid that must be repaid.

**Scholarships:** funds for college distributed according to requirements set by the scholarship provider, like excellence in academics or sports.

**Work-Study Program:** a federal program that provides students with part-time employment, often on campus, to help meet their financial needs.

## ACTIVITY STEPS

### I. Warm Up: Financial Aid and FAFSA Review (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Today you will continue your college research. Before you begin, we will spend a few minutes discussing how to pay for your education. Because many of you may want to get a head start on your college applications over the summer, we'll review some of the basics of finding financial aid. As you continue your college research, you should keep both higher-priced and less expensive college options in mind. If an expensive school offers you lots of financial aid after you've applied, it will definitely be worth considering. If a higher-priced school doesn't offer enough financial aid to make it an affordable choice, you'll still have less expensive options available.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Does anyone remember the four main types of financial aid? [Give students a chance to respond. Jot their responses on the board. Students may come up with some or all of the following: grants, loans, scholarships, and work-study.]
3. Project **Student Handbook page 146, Financial Aid 411** on the overhead or LCD projector.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Grants, loans, scholarships, and work-study are four categories of financial aid. Each is different, but in the end, they all help you pay for college. [Invite volunteers to read definitions of each.] How is a scholarship different from the other forms of aid? [Give students a chance to respond.] A scholarship awards financial aid based on merit or accomplishments. The other forms of financial assistance are often based on need. So, there are two kinds of financial aid – merit-based and needs-based. [Ask students to predict the differences between these two types of aid.]

4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Needs-based assistance may come from a college or from the government. Any student applying for federal assistance (from the government), must complete the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**. Many schools also use the FAFSA to award their own financial aid. There is no charge to complete the FAFSA. The FAFSA helps the government and colleges ensure that they are providing support to students who need it the most.

The FAFSA is completed during your senior year, but it's helpful to learn about this information in advance so you're ready when the time comes. For one thing, the FAFSA requires information about your family's finances. If your parent or guardian is getting

worried about paying for school, you can help prepare him or her for the next steps. There's a very comprehensive government publication that has absolutely everything you need to know about financial aid: *Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid*. It's downloadable from the website, [http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student\\_guide/index.html](http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html), which is listed on **Student Handbook page 146, Financial Aid 411**.

5. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Finding merit-based aid is a separate process. Colleges may offer merit-based aid to attract outstanding students, musicians, or athletes to their schools. There are also many different scholarships provided by various companies and organizations. Researching scholarships is another good use of your time this summer. Two resources to make your scholarship search easier are [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) and [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). Both of these websites are listed on **Student Handbook page 146, Financial Aid 411**.

Display **Facilitator Resource 1, Need vs. Merit-Based Financial Aid** using an overhead projector. Ask for a volunteer to explain the difference between merit and need-based financial aid, making sure to clarify any misconceptions the students may have. Make sure that students also understand that scholarships, grants, and work-study do not need to be paid back; they are in essence “free money”. Loans however do need to be paid back with interest.

### III. College Research Continues (30 minutes)

1. Have students open to **Portfolio pages 13-22, My Top Ten Schools** and take out any college catalogs they brought with them.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now you will continue researching colleges on your list. Remember, you will find the information you are looking for in catalogs you received in the mail as well as college websites. You should have already researched the academic requirements for each school, so today you can focus on the other elements listed on **Portfolio pages 13-22, My Top Ten Schools**.

As you research, you may discover a college is not right for you—maybe because it doesn't have a major in your area of interest, or because it is too difficult or too easy academically, or because it is too far away from, or too close to, home. If you've decided a school is not for you, there's no need to research further. Mark the “Probably Not” choice at the end of **Portfolio pages 13-22, My Top Ten Schools**.

On the other hand, if there is something about a college that is very important to you, such as a strong art program or opportunities to study abroad, then you'll want to focus on this for all schools that you are researching. As you find colleges that fit your needs, mark the "Definitely" choice at the end of the Portfolio page.

3. Circulate throughout the classroom as students conduct research, helping them as needed.

#### **IV. Wrap Up: Research Findings (5 minutes)**

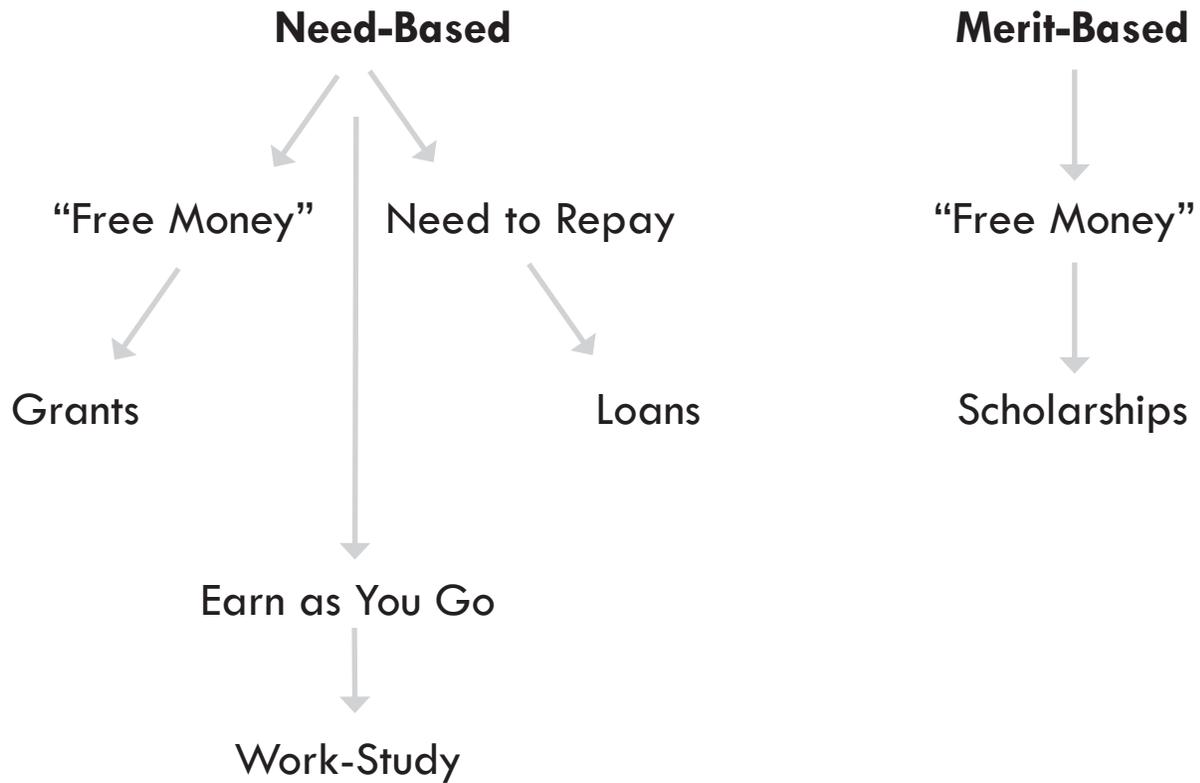
1. Have students stop researching for today, and encourage them to share their findings so far.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Describe something interesting you discovered during your research today. How did this affect your interest in the college? [Allow students time to respond.]

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Sometimes finding the information you need is not easy. If you are feeling frustrated, you are not alone. What information are you having a hard time finding? [Give students a chance to respond. As each student with an issue states his or her problem, invite classmates to share solutions based on their own research.]

Remind students that they'll continue their research next week. Let them know you'll also review the college application process next week so they know what the next steps are once they've identified colleges of interest.

## Need vs. Merit-Based Financial Aid



## Financial Aid 411

### VOCABULARY

**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.

**Financial Aid:** scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study programs that help pay for tuition and other post-secondary school expenses.

**Grant:** also called gift aid, a grant is financial aid that doesn't have to be repaid. Grant aid comes from federal and state governments and from individual colleges, usually on the basis of financial need.

**Loan:** financial aid that must be repaid.

**Scholarships:** funds for college distributed according to requirements set by the scholarship provider, like excellence in academics or sports.

**Work-Study Program:** a federal program that provides students with part-time employment, often on campus, to help meet their financial needs.

### RESOURCES

**Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid**

[http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student\\_guide/index.html](http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html)

**CollegeBoard Scholarship Search**

[http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch\\_ss/welcome.jsp](http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_ss/welcome.jsp)

**FastWeb: Scholarships, Financial Aid, and Colleges**

<http://www.fastweb.com>

## Research III

### The **BIG** Idea

- How do I decide where to apply, and how do I begin the process?

### AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up (5 minutes)
- II. Application Review (10 minutes)
- III. College Research Continues (20 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up: The Finalists Are . . . (10 minutes)

### MATERIALS

#### **PORTFOLIO PAGES:**

- Portfolio page 23, College Comparison Chart
- Portfolio pages 13-22, My Top Ten Schools (from Ed After HS 5)

#### **STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:**

- Student Handbook page 147, What I Need to Complete a College Application
- Student Handbook page 148 and 149, College Application Elements

- Overhead projector

### OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Review what they need to know, and what they need to do, to complete a college application.
- Continue college research.
- Tentatively decide on three or more college choices, including at least one reach, match, and safety.

## OVERVIEW .....

Students begin by briefly reviewing the college application process, and learn what they can do to begin during the summer. The remainder of the lesson is devoted to the completion of research of colleges on their Top Ten list. At the conclusion of the lesson, students discuss how to compare their research findings.

## PREPARATION .....

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
  - **Student Handbook page 148 and 149, College Application Elements**
  - **Portfolio page 23, College Comparison Chart**
- Tell students to bring in the college catalogs, applications, and other materials that they've received in the mail.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION .....

Once students choose the colleges they wish to apply to, the next critical step is organizing and compiling information for their college applications. Students need to recognize that college applications are often long and involved, and therefore require time and effort to complete accurately. The summer is a perfect opportunity for college-bound teens to begin working on their applications. For example, asking teachers to write letters of recommendation during the summer—rather than fall when they will be competing with other classmates for the teacher's attention—puts less pressure on the teachers and themselves. Beginning applications over the summer also means students are not rushing, and therefore less likely to make mistakes. The extra time to proofread (and have others proofread) all elements of their applications, including essays, puts applicants at an advantage. Students also need time to read each application in its entirety to make sure they understand what each college wants from them. By doing this step in the summer, students have time to call the admissions office to get answers to items they may not understand.

## IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS .....

If students need more than 20 minutes to research their colleges, skip the **Warm Up** activity, and begin with **Activity II, Application Review**.

## ACTIVITY STEPS

### I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. Direct students, as they enter, to the “Do Now” on **Student Handbook page 147, What I Need to Complete a College Application**. Give them 2 minutes to complete the activity.
2. Invite volunteers to share what they wrote down.
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** As you’ve probably seen from your research, college applications consist of many parts. Right now, this may seem overwhelming, and something you don’t have to think about until sometime in the distant future. But you can start the process this summer and avoid rushing around next fall to meet deadlines. You don’t want to have to choose between completing college applications and other senior-year activities: schoolwork, part-time jobs, and more entertaining pursuits.

Being prepared is key to accurately completing your applications. Today we are going to spend a few minutes reviewing what you need to consider as you begin thinking about the application process.

### II. Application Review (10 minutes)

1. Project **Student Handbook pages 148-149, College Application Elements** on the overhead projector.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Last year, you reviewed the Practice Application in IHaveA-PlanIowa.gov. Next year, you will focus on certain elements of the application, such as the essay, over several lessons.

2. Direct students’ attention to the overhead.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Although applications may vary from college to college, most require some, if not all, of these pieces [point to overhead]. It’s important to gather all of the information the applications require well before the submission due date. For example, it’s helpful if you allow plenty of time for teachers to write recommendations. Making this request in the spring gives your teachers the time they need to write quality letters, and lets you beat the rush of requests they’ll get in the fall. We’ll talk more about this next week.

3. Read aloud each of the elements on **Student Handbook pages 148 and 149, College**

**Application Elements.** Emphasize elements students can work on this summer, as noted on the overhead. Remind students that the college application process will be reviewed in more depth next fall.

### III. College Research Continues (20 minutes)

1. Have students take out **Portfolio page 13- 22, My Top Ten Schools**.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Today you will continue researching colleges on your list. Remember, you will find the information you are looking for on the colleges' websites and in the catalogs you received in the mail. It's quite possible that you won't get to every item for each school, so don't sweat it. Before class ends, we'll regroup and talk about how to decide which schools to apply to.

Give students 20 minutes to continue researching their colleges.

### IV. Wrap Up: The Finalist Are . . . (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** You've done a great job researching colleges these last few weeks. You are now well on the road to finding schools that will be a good fit for you. Don't stop now! You can continue to research on your own this summer. The time you put in now will save you from rushing around in the fall, and will allow you to really consider your needs and interests.
2. Have students review **Portfolio pages 13- 22, My Top Ten Schools** portfolio pages.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Look at your research portfolio pages so far. What schools have you ruled out for sure? Why? [Give students a chance to respond]. What schools are definitely in? Why? [Give students a chance to respond.] There may be colleges on your list that you are still not sure about, maybe because you don't have all of the information you need. If this is the case, what do you think are your next steps? [Give students a chance to respond. Be sure students recognize they can continue their research online and/or call the school if they can't find answers to questions on the site or in the catalog.]

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** As you narrow down the list of colleges this summer, and determine which ones you will apply to, make sure to include at least one safety, one match, and one reach school. If you don't have at least one school in each category, you can return to [IHaveAPlanIowa.gov](http://IHaveAPlanIowa.gov) and complete the School Finder tool as often as you like by adjusting the criteria to fit different needs and interests.

4. Distribute **Portfolio page 23, College Comparison Chart**, to each student, and display a transparency of this page on the overhead projector.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** You've collected quite a bit of information over the past few weeks, and will continue to do so in the weeks ahead. To help you compare your findings, use **Portfolio page 23, College Comparison Chart**. This "at-a-glance" chart allows you to put all the pros and cons in one place, so that you can compare your options quickly and easily. For each college you are considering, mark items you rate positively with a "+", items you rate negatively with a "-", and record a "0" for neutral, or no opinion. [Model how to do this.]

For example, if you're hoping to major in music, a strong music program gets a plus, and an only-ok program gets a minus. (If the school has no music program, you can drop it from your list.) For the item marked "Academic Match," write safety, match, or reach in the box provided.

Please feel free to see me or your school counselor if you encounter any difficult college research questions over the next few weeks. And keep up the good work. Any research you do now will save you time and stress in the fall.

## What I Need to Complete a College Application

**Directions:** List four items that might be included in a college application.

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

## College Application Elements

Most colleges give you a choice of completing an application online and submitting it directly to the school. Or, you can fill out your application offline and send it in the mail, the old-fashioned way.

### Application Fee

- Most colleges charge a fee to apply. The fee is usually non-refundable, even if you are not offered admission to the school. Most application fees are about \$25. Some colleges charge up to \$60. Other colleges have no fee. Many colleges offer fee waivers for applicants from low-income families.
- **WHAT TO DO THIS SUMMER:** If you need a fee waiver, call the college's admissions office for more information.

### High School Transcript

- An official at your high school, such as your school counselor, completes a form that includes your transcript. Remember, a transcript is an official record of your classes and grades. If the school provides a form 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.
- **WHAT TO DO THIS SUMMER:** Gather the transcript forms for the schools to which you are applying so you can pass them along to your school counselor in the fall.

### Admission Test Scores

- Many colleges require SAT, SAT Subject Test, or ACT test scores. Test scores are a standard way of measuring your ability to do college-level work.
- **WHAT TO DO THIS SUMMER:** Contact the College Board or the ACT and direct them to send your scores to colleges not included on your list when you took the test. If you've not taken the SAT or ACT, make arrangements to do so.

## **Letters of Recommendation**

- Most colleges request letters of recommendation from a teacher, counselor, or other adult who knows you well.
- **WHAT TO DO THIS SUMMER:** Make a list of teachers, counselors, and others whom you would like to request letters of recommendation. Make your request to those people. For those who agree, be sure to provide a deadline.

## **Essay**

- Many colleges ask you to write an essay. Essays are a chance for you to show what makes you stand out from everyone else. The essay is your opportunity to be creative and show admissions committees what makes you different.
- **WHAT TO DO THIS SUMMER:** Review college applications and check out the required essay topics. Start thinking about how you might answer these questions.

## **Interview**

- Although some colleges may not require interviews, you should take advantage of the opportunity. A face-to-face interview lets you connect with a person who will have some say in whether you will be offered admission.
- **WHAT TO DO THIS SUMMER:** Set up on-campus interviews for local colleges to which you are applying. For colleges that are far away, arrange to meet with an alumnus (somebody who graduated from that college) in your community.

## **Audition/Portfolio**

- Music and art colleges or programs may ask for samples of your work, such as a portfolio, video, CD, etc. to demonstrate your ability.
- **WHAT TO DO THIS SUMMER:** Work on creating your portfolio, video, CD, etc. Your high school teachers may have advice on what to include.

## College Comparison Chart

**Directions:** Write the names of the colleges you are considering across the top row. For each criterion, mark items you rate positively with a “+”, items you rate negatively with a “-”, and mark items that are neutral with a “0”. Next to “Academic Match,” rate whether the college is a reach, match, or safety school.

Criteria	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4	College 5	College 6	College 7	College 8	College 9	College 10
Academic Match										
Setting										
Tuition										
Academics										
Student Population										
Campus Facilities										
Campus Life										
Off-Campus Community										

## Letters of Recommendation

### The **BIG** Idea

- How can I get a positive letter of recommendation for college?

### AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up (5 minutes)
- II. Positive Recommendation (10 minutes)
- III. Asking for a Recommendation (10 minutes)
- IV. Recommendation Worksheet (15 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

### MATERIALS

#### STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 150, I'm Right for the Job
- Student Handbook pages 151 and 152, One Student, Two Letters
- Student Handbook page 153, Recommendation Worksheet

#### Overhead and LCD projector

### OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Review letters of recommendation and identify important elements of a positive recommendation.
- Understand whom to ask for a recommendation, how to ask, and how to help this person write an effective letter.
- Identify someone to write a recommendation and complete a worksheet to help that person write his or her letter.

## OVERVIEW .....

Students review the purpose of letters of recommendation for college applications. They will read examples and identify important characteristics of effective letters. Next, they will discuss steps they can take to help someone write effective references for them. Finally, they will complete a worksheet with important details about their achievements, goals, and challenges to help someone write a letter of recommendation. As a homework assignment, they will choose one person and use this worksheet to request a letter of recommendation.

## PREPARATION .....

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies:
  - **Student Handbook pages 151-152, One Student, Two Letters**
  - **Student Handbook page 153, Recommendation Worksheet**
- Prior to facilitating this lesson, consult with your school counselor regarding the procedures for requesting letters of recommendation.
- Decide on how you want to handle the letter of recommendation homework assignment for students who are not applying to college. Your school counselor may have suggestions.

## IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS .....

In **Activity IV**, if you feel your students will need more time to complete **Student Handbook page 153, Recommendation Worksheet**, this activity could be introduced in class and assigned as homework.

## ACTIVITY STEPS

### I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. As students enter, ask them to complete **Student Handbook page 150, I'm Right for the Job**. Give them three minutes to complete the activity.
2. Discuss this activity with the class, helping them to see the importance of a recommendation and the challenges a writer may face: What was easy about this task? What was difficult? What do you think it would be like to write a recommendation for someone else?
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Today, we're going to talk about letters of recommendation — an important component of your college application. First, what is a letter of recommendation? Why are they important? [Let students share answers.]

There's more to you than your grades, test scores, and extracurricular activities. Letters of recommendation reveal another side of you. They describe your character and qualities that make you stand out from all the other applicants.

4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** In today's class, we'll talk about what makes a strong letter and how to improve your chances of receiving one. We'll look at whom to ask, how to help that person write a positive letter, and how to follow up afterwards.

### II. A Positive Recommendation (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Today, we're focusing on recommendations for college, but this will certainly not be the only recommendation letter you'll need in your life. Letters of recommendation — also called references — are required in all sorts of situations that require good character. A letter of recommendation provides insights into your past behavior as a prediction of how you might act in the future. What are some examples of times you'll need references? [Example: getting an apartment, adopting a child.]

You'll also need recommendations for future jobs. Though these references are usually done by phone instead of in writing, they are an important part of the hiring process. Employers count on these references to determine what kind of employee you'll be.

2. Have students turn to their **Student Handbook pages 151 and 152, One Student, Two Letters**, which provide two examples of letters of recommendation. Ask students to read both letters and underline details that might impress them if they were the admissions officers.

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Well, what did you think? Which letter is going to make a better impression on an admissions committee? Why? [Discuss both letters]:
  - a. Letter A: Point out that the first letter repeats information on the application. There's no depth; it gives specific qualities — “bright and hard-working” — but offers no examples to show these qualities. Also, it's missing an important component of a good letter of reference: the student's strengths *and* weaknesses.
  - b. Letter B. This letter is full of specific examples about Amelia's strengths and ways in which she overcame challenges. If the letter writer knows you well, letters of recommendation can also help explain academic problems (for example, low grades during a family illness).

### III. Asking for a Recommendation (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now that we know what a great recommendation looks like, how can you make sure someone writes one for you? First, think about who's writing the letter and choose the writers wisely. Ask people who know you personally through school or extra-curricular activities, such as a teacher, counselor, coach, boss, or internship director. Make sure you have a positive relationship with this person.

Also keep in mind that many schools require two to three recommendations. Typically, at least one should be a teacher, ideally from a junior or senior year class. Have a backup person in mind in case one person isn't able to write one for you.

Remember that letter writers must usually send their letters directly to the school. This demonstrates that their response is confidential. Sometimes a letter writer might choose to give you a copy so you can see all the nice things he or she said about you, but this is not required.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Next, think about how you ask these people for a recommendation. Imagine I'm a student, and \_\_\_\_\_ [choose a student near you] is my math teacher. Which of these approaches do you think would be more effective?

Model the following ways of asking for a recommendation.

- a. “Yo, Mr. T. I need you to write a letter of recommendation for college. The school needs it sometime next week. You can just give it to me and I'll mail it.”
- b. “Hi Mr. Thompson. I'm applying to City College and they have requested a letter of recommendation. It would be great if you could write one for me, since you know me through class and the school newspaper. The letter is due in six weeks, on November 15. If you have a few minutes some time this week, I'd like to sit down

and talk with you about the letter.”

3. Discuss both approaches as a class.
4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Here are some important things to remember about requesting a recommendation letter:
  - Be clear about the details. It’s helpful to let the recommender know what college you’re applying to. He or she may be more or less willing to write a recommendation depending on the school(s) you’re applying to. And make the deadline clear so they know when schools need to receive the letter. Always give the writer a pre-addressed stamped envelope for each college that should receive the recommendation. Some schools offer a way to submit recommendations online. If this is the case, make sure your recommender has instructions for doing so.
  - Be clear about why you’ve asked this person instead of others. Maybe you made significant improvement in his or her class? Perhaps he or she was the teacher advisor for an extracurricular club you were active in?
  - Give the person plenty of time. Be respectful of the person’s own schedule. Give him or her at least two months. Since most applications are due in January, this means asking for letters no later than the fall (September, October) of your senior year. It is actually preferred to ask your teachers at the end of your junior year.
  - Let the person know how much you appreciate it. Don’t take this for granted. After all, you’re asking this person to spend a good amount of his or her own time on this letter. Be appreciative!
5. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** But here’s the **most important** thing you can do to ensure an effective letter: Give the writer details that will jog his or her memory about specific projects and all your great qualities. Remember, you probably have only a handful of teachers, but every teacher may see more than a hundred students a day. A few details will help your teacher remember what you accomplished in his class, and it will be easier for him to give examples that describe you. The bottom line is this: **The more information you give the person about yourself (accomplishments, goals, and even challenges), the better the letter will be.**

#### IV. Recommendation Worksheet (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now you’re going to work on a recommendation worksheet — a one-page form that includes everything a writer would need to write your recommendation.

- 2. SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Even if the person has already agreed to write a recommendation, you should deliver this in person. Don't just e-mail it or drop it on his or her desk. Schedule a time to meet with the person and go over it in case he or she has any questions. Also, it's a good idea to follow up with this person one week before the deadline to see if they need additional information from you and to make sure they've remembered to send the letter.
- 3.** Have students turn to their **Student Handbook page 153, Recommendation Worksheet.**

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** This worksheet includes everything the writer needs for your letter of recommendation: details about which college to send the application, the deadline, and details about your achievements, challenges, and goals. To ensure a strong letter, be as specific and detailed as possible.

Give students about 15 minutes to complete the worksheet.

- 4.** Come together as a class. Discuss and answer any questions students have. If time permits, you could have students exchange their worksheets with a partner for feedback.
- 5. SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now, for the big assignment! For homework, I'd like each of you to follow through in requesting a recommendation. Use your worksheet to make the request, asking the writer to send the letter in time for your first college deadline. Next week, let me know whom you've asked.

## **V. Wrap Up: Saying Thank You and Keeping in Touch (5 minutes)**

- 1. SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** In this lesson, we've seen that asking for a letter of recommendation takes a little work. But let's not forget that it takes even more work to write that letter. That's why it's so important to follow up with a thank-you note. Even if you say it in person, which I'm sure you will, a short note is critical and should be written right away.
- 2. SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** You should also follow up to let the person know which college you selected. They'll appreciate knowing that their effort made a difference. And keep in touch with these people. You may need their help in the future, and you also want to honor their investment of time with news of your success.
- 3. SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** That wraps up our Education After High School unit for this year. We'll pick up this subject again next fall. Till then I hope you'll continue your college research. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Next week, we'll begin a new unit on *Money Matters*, when you'll learn about renting

an apartment, choosing a car, and more.

### SKILLS CHECKLIST

Direct students' attention to **Portfolio page 26, Grade 11 Skills Checklist**. Have students complete the skills checklist questions for Education After High School skills.

#### EDUCATION AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

##### I CAN...

Choose courses for senior year based on high school graduation requirements, college recommendations, and suggested courses for a career of interest.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Identify college majors I'm interested in.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Identify and compare several options for education after high school.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Find answers to questions about community college, tech/trade school, apprenticeships, and the military.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Compare my academic record with college requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Find out more about the FAFSA and college scholarships on my own.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Identify steps in the college application process that can be done during the summer between my junior and senior year.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Research and compare colleges that interest me.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Identify at least one reach, match, and safety school that I'd like to attend.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Identify and effectively ask someone to write a recommendation.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well

## I'm Right for the Job

A friend has just been offered a part-time job he can't take, and he's been asked to recommend a friend. You'd like the job, and he's asked you to help him describe you to the employer.

List three adjectives you'd use to describe yourself that would convince an employer you should be hired.

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Describe a situation in which you showed that you were a trustworthy and responsible person.

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## One Student, Two Letters

Read the following letters and underline details that might impress you as an admissions officer. Which one do you think would make a better impression on an admissions committee? Why?

### Letter A:

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To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing on behalf of Amelia Smith, a senior at Avonlea High School, where I was her sophomore English teacher. Amelia is a bright and hard-working student, as evidenced by her high grades and excellent SAT scores.

Ms. Smith has been a member of the National Honor Society since her junior year. She is active in the Future Teachers of America and the school language club, where she serves as the group's secretary.

She would be an asset to any college program, and I highly recommend her.

Sincerely,

Robert McCoy

Honors English Teacher

## One Student, Two Letters (continued)

### Letter B:

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To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing on behalf of Amelia Smith, whom I've known since her sophomore year at Avonlea High School. Two years ago, Ms. Smith became a volunteer in my first-grade classroom because of her avid interest in a career as an elementary teacher. There was no official program in place, so Amelia had to set up an interview with the school principal - not an easy task! Once she met with his approval, she arranged to help out two afternoons a week after school. She was steadfast about showing up on time and throwing herself with great enthusiasm into the business of teaching. She created ingenious board games for practicing phonics skills, as well as elegant displays of student work in the hallways.

In addition, Amelia volunteered her time as a summer tutor for her next-door neighbors - second- and third-grade boys struggling with reading. She met with them four mornings a week during July and August following her sophomore year. When we spoke later, she mentioned that she had a lot to learn about teaching.

Amelia is also an active member of her scout troop. For her, this is a much greater commitment than an occasional camp-out or cookie sale. Several years ago, her troop set their sights on a trip to Europe between their junior and senior years, and it was amazing to see this happen last summer. The parents of the troop members are not wealthy; most of the money for the trip was earned baby-sitting, house-cleaning, and through team efforts like flower sales and car washes. Amelia laughingly told me her neighbors used to hide when they saw her coming, knowing that she probably had some product to sell.

Amelia has a fine academic record, but it only tells half the story. Her generosity of spirit, curiosity, and initiative will serve her well in her pursuit of a career as an elementary teacher.

I highly recommend her for your program.

Sincerely,

Margaret Simms

Teacher, Westlea Elementary School

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## Recommendation Worksheet

Complete the following worksheet for each person you ask to write a letter of recommendation.

<b>Student's Name</b>	
<b>Phone Number</b>	
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Date of Request</b>	
<b>College to receive recommendation</b>	
<b>Date due</b>	
<b>Stamped, addressed enveloped attached (check) <input type="checkbox"/></b>	

Answer the following questions to give the writer more information about yourself. To ensure a strong letter, be as specific and detailed as possible. Use the back if you need more space.

1. What assignment or accomplishment for this class or activity are you most proud of? Why?

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2. List three adjectives that describe you. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What do you think sets you apart from other students? What makes you different?

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4. Describe one weakness you have or a challenge you've faced and how you overcame it.

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5. What career or major would you like to pursue? Why is this college the best place for you to accomplish your goals? (Or simply explain why you have selected this college.)

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6. What other information would help this person write your recommendation?

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