
WITHIN REACH

College- and Career Preparation Timetables

If you're unsure when to start talking about career exploration with your children, follow the suggested timetables below.

Key events or milestones are bolded—they require your special attention. Also, “post-secondary” refers to anything after high school.

| Freshman Year |

The Goal is to Begin the Self-Assessment Process.

- Have your children review post-secondary educational opportunities such as four-year institutions, apprenticeships, two-year colleges, technical and vocational schools and the military.
- Encourage your children to stick with a rigorous high school curriculum to prepare for a broad range of occupational careers.
- Arrange for your children to take career interest inventories to evaluate occupational and personal interests.
- Encourage your children to obtain current information about different occupations, including salary ranges, duties, tasks and related jobs.
- Make sure your children's high school program meets admission requirements of their top three post-secondary choices. If it does not, work with the counselor and principal to resolve the discrepancies.
- Discuss the impact of grades in obtaining different sources of financial aid for post-secondary studies.
- Help your children maintain a collection or “portfolio” of growing personal data, including grades, work experiences and work history, and other results from occupational and educational investigation. List extracurricular activities, volunteer activities, awards and honors. Start a résumé!
- Continue to monitor financial plans to facilitate your children's postsecondary education.

The Goal is to Seriously Investigate Post-Secondary Options.

- Review career exploration tips on *Next Steps Idaho* website.
- Arrange for your children to take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), an exam that prepares students for the SAT, which—along with the ACT—many colleges require as part of the entrance qualifications. Review results with the school counselor and establish instructional strategies for areas of academic weakness.
- Review and revise the four-year graduation plan with your children as needed.
- Ask the school counselor to establish job shadowing opportunities.
- Attend “Career Days” at school with your children.
- Attend career fairs held in the community to speak to recruiters about different jobs to learn more about occupations of interest.
- Arrange for your children to interview people who work in fields of interest.
- Encourage your children to volunteer or work part-time in fields of interest.
- Retake career interest inventories to determine if interests have deepened in a particular field or if they have expanded to include other occupations.
- Obtain labor market information—such as national and state annual earnings averages, growth of the occupational field and best locations—for at least three occupations of interest.
- Encourage your children to identify the lifestyle they want. Compare that information to the occupations of interest. Do they correlate? Help your children understand and balance the difference between wants and needs.
- Investigate summer school possibilities to improve areas of academic weakness or as enrichment programs.
- Meet with the school counselor to discuss enrollment and access to postsecondary courses. These opportunities could include dualcredit, regular classes taken during the summer between the junior and senior years, distance learning, technical colleges and community colleges.
- Investigate ROTC (Reserve Officers’ Training Corps) enrollment and scholarship opportunities. Junior ROTC is also available at many high schools. For more information, visit the website at: todaysmilitary.com/training/ROTC.
- Continue to monitor financial plans to facilitate your children’s postsecondary education.

The Goal is to Prepare for Post-Secondary Education.

- See that your children register, prepare for and take the SAT and/ or ACT. Check with your counselor for details and exam dates or visit collegeboard.org or ACT.org.
- Discuss what your children like and dislike about past work experiences (if any). What kind of employment do they want to find or avoid?
- Discuss money, personal and social management skills and how they can help in future occupational pursuits.
- Examine admissions applications from post-secondary institutions. Many are available online. In Idaho, you can apply to all state-funded schools and some private institutions creating an Apply Idaho account which can be found on the *Next Steps* website. This is an Idaho-only common application that is online, free, and easy to use.
- Have your children obtain more detailed information about occupations of interest from the Internet, professional organizations, school counselors and government agencies. A good place to start is the *Idaho Works* website: IdahoWorks.gov
- Have your children take on a summer job. In the spring, ask the school counselor to help arrange summer internships in occupations of interest. If that doesn't work, any job will do. The goal is to familiarize your children with the types of expectations employers have of employees.
- Ask the school counselor about study abroad programs, work-study programs and/or youth exchange programs—all of which can broaden your children's horizons and clarify their interests.
- Investigate the financial requirements of post-secondary training selections. Begin searching for financial aid grants, scholarships and work-study options.
- Encourage your children to gather as much information as possible about their preferred post-secondary institutions. Visit campuses and websites. Talk to former students. And rely on tools such as the College Cost Estimator found on the *Next Steps Idaho* website or InvestInWhatsNext.org, a college- and career-readiness course created by the Federal Reserve.
- Maintain contact with the school counselor's office for application deadline notices, scholarship information and campus recruiter visits.
- Advise your children's guidance counselor about their interests. The counselor may know of schools that have the best post-secondary program for your children to enroll in and keep a "head's up" for related financial aid.

The Goal is to Complete a Challenging Academic Course Schedule and Gain Admission to the Postsecondary Institution of Choice.

- See that your children refine their investigations of occupations, programs of study (college majors) and educational institutions. It is now time to make some decisions about their future pursuits. Make sure labor market information is accurate and up to date.
- Apply for financial aid in the fall of your children's senior year. Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov). This application is the first step to getting Pell Grants, student loans, college work-study and even financial support from the state or individual colleges.
- Apply for all scholarships possible.
- Have your children identify (and ask) teachers, employers and others who might write positive letters of recommendation for college admissions.
- See that your child submits applications to post-secondary institutions before the deadlines, which are non-negotiable.
- If necessary, have your children retake the ACT and SAT to try to raise the scores.
- Submit college admissions test scores, high school transcripts and letters of recommendation to post-secondary institutions. Follow all deadline dates indicated on admissions materials.
- Have your children compile a portfolio if they haven't already. Include employment history, school transcripts, letters of recommendations from employers and teachers, work samples and so on. Have an updated résumé.
- Make sure your children attend career fairs held at school and in the community to apply for summer jobs or to seek internships in the occupation of interest.
- Make sure your children don't fall victim to the "Senior Slump." Many students, especially those who have gained early admission to colleges, take few courses their senior year and may be tempted to skip classes. They are wasting a marvelous opportunity to learn—free of tuition. Cruising and skipping may endanger their college acceptance and/or scholarship opportunities.
- If your children decide to attend a college or university, visit the college career center and learn about the services it offers. Check out internship opportunities and school activities that relate to professions of interest.

This list of activities by grade isn't exhaustive. You can surely add items. But it does cover the main tasks and points you in the right direction. Plus, there are many other resources upon which you can rely.