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As first-time filmmakers when we set out to make *First Generation*, in many ways we felt like students at the start of high school who want to go to college but are somewhat left to themselves to figure out how they’re going to get there.

We’d heard many startling statistics claiming that low-income students weren’t making it to college. Some experts said they weren’t trying hard enough. Others said they didn’t have the resources. But we knew there had to be more to the story. So arming ourselves with a camera, we took a leap of faith and began filming four low-income high school students as they went through the college application process in hopes of shedding some light on the social inequalities faced by those who are first in their families to go to college.

Once we finished the film, we had the opportunity to screen across the country at high schools and middle schools and hear firsthand how students related to the stories presented in the movie. Some identified with Jess’ reticence to take out student loans or Soma’s uncertainty about the whole college application process. Others struggled like Dontay to overcome mistakes they’d made in the past or felt, like Cecilia, that they were on their own. For many students this was the first time they heard of the FAFSA, application fee waivers, or were introduced to the idea that low-income students don’t pay college “sticker prices. But perhaps most surprising were those students who didn’t realize until they saw the film that they were first generation and that there are thousands of others like them in the US, and even in other countries, dealing with the same issues and struggles.

Hearing these student reactions made us realize that we wanted to give students access to accurate information about preparing for and applying to college, so that after they watched *First Generation* they could be equipped to make informed choices about their futures. So we decided to develop this curriculum so teachers could use it in their classrooms as early as middle school and throughout high school, to guide students on their path to college.

Being the first to do anything is always challenging, and while students who are trying to be the first in their families to go to college may be discouraged at times, the first step is believing that, with hard work, a college education is attainable. There are myriads of successful first generation college graduates who know this to be true. Some are well known like talk show host Oprah Winfrey and entrepreneur Mark Cuban, but there are thousands of others, in many different careers and walks of life, and in nearly every school and community.

Our hope is *First Generation* will encourage students to pursue their educational goals, and that along with the curriculum they’ll find the answers they need to get there. Together we can help inspire the next generation of college graduates!

Thank you for sharing this resource with your students!

-Adam and Jaye Fenderson
USING FIRST GENERATION IN THE CLASSROOM:

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

This curriculum was made possible by the Go College! initiative – a collaboration between First Generation and Wells Fargo to help close the education gap for underrepresented students. Designed by teachers for teachers, the curriculum has been tested in classrooms across the country and can be used in any junior high or high school classroom.

The curriculum is based on the feature-length version of First Generation and includes 1-week, 3-week, and 6-week plans. You can, however, create your own lesson organization by selecting the activities most applicable to your students.

As you begin, we suggest viewing the film on your own before sharing it with your students. Below, is a list of the chapters and themes that will be referenced throughout the curriculum.

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<th>Chapters</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>The Acronyms of College</td>
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<td>Senior Year: Opportunities &amp; Challenges</td>
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<td>Options &amp; Issues</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Almost There…</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Second Chances &amp; College Dreams</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Awards, Scholarships &amp; Choosing a College</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Graduation, Success, &amp; Regrets</td>
<td>1:16:33 - End</td>
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</table>

Once you have selected your curriculum path, the calendars on page 8 will direct you to the pages required for the lessons. In most cases, the worksheets/activities will act as your guide through the day’s lesson. When necessary, a teacher key is provided. It is assumed you will review and explain the homework listed at the bottom of each day’s lesson.

Finally, we encourage you to visit GoCollegeNow.org to share the film, take the pledge, and get more resources for your classroom and students.
FIRST GENERATION
A GUIDE TO COLLEGE

2

CALENDARS
## ONE-WEEK LESSON PLAN SCHEDULE

### WEEK 1 OF 1

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<td>Watch first half of film</td>
<td>Watch second half of film</td>
<td>Discussion Question List B (10 min) – Pg. 25</td>
<td>Self-Evaluation Follow Up (15 min) – Pg. 69-70</td>
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<tr>
<td>College Assumptions Test (10 min) – Pg. 32-35</td>
<td>Chapters 1-5 (0:00-48:29)</td>
<td>Chapters 6-9 (48:29-End)</td>
<td>Creating a Thesis Statement (20 min) – Pg. 54-55</td>
<td>First Generation Identifying the Theme (15 min) – Pg. 60-62</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Take notes during film: First Generation Film Notes – Pg. 41-42</td>
<td>Take notes during film: First Generation Film Notes – Pg. 42-43</td>
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<td>Introduce Homework (5 min)</td>
<td>Introduce Homework (5 min)</td>
<td>Self-Evaluation Follow Up (15 min) – Pg. 69-70</td>
<td>First Generation Identifying the Theme (15 min) – Pg. 60-62</td>
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**Take Home For Parents:** “Getting Your Child To College” – Pg. 120-121
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<td>Watch first half of First Generation</td>
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<td>Discussion Question List 1 &amp; 2 (10 min) – Pg. 20-21</td>
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<td>Take notes during film: First Generation Film Notes – Pg. 41-42</td>
<td>Discuss Homework: Acronyms and College Jargon (5 min)</td>
<td>Finish KWL Worksheet: Add three ideas to the KWL Chart in the &quot;L&quot; section (10) – Pg. 30-31</td>
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*Class sessions are estimated at 45-50 minutes; however, if time allows we suggest using “Discussion Questions”, “Journal Prompts” or “Writing Prompts” to extend the session.*
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<td>Introduce Homework (5 min)</td>
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<td><strong>Read</strong>: Letter from Dontay – Pg. 109</td>
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*Class sessions are estimated at 45-50 minutes; however, if time allows we suggest using “Discussion Questions”, “Journal Prompts” or “Writing Prompts” to extend the session.*
# Three-Week Lesson Plan Schedule

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Self-Evaluation (10 min) – Pg. 67-68  
Self-Evaluation Follow Up (10 min) – Pg. 69-70  
Introduce Homework (5 min) | Teachers’ Choice: Guest Speaker – Pg. 83-85  
Or  
Counselor Scavenger Hunt – Pg. 86-87  
Introduce Homework (5 min) | The Million Dollar Scholarship: Persuasive Arguments (Day 1) (45 min) – Pg. 74-77 | The Million Dollar Scholarship: Persuasive Arguments (Day 2) (30 min) – Pg. 74-77  
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Worksheet: Guest Speaker Brainstorm – Pg. 85  
Write: Reflection on Guest Speaker  
Continue: The Million Dollar Scholarship: Persuasive Arguments – Pg. 74-77  
Worksheet: Response to the Million Dollar Scholarship – Pg. 77  
Take Home For Parents: “Getting Your Child To College” – Pg. 120-121

*Class sessions are estimated at 45-50 minutes; however, if time allows we suggest using “Discussion Questions”, “Journal Prompts” or “Writing Prompts” to extend the session.*
# Six-Week Lesson Plan Schedule

## Week 1 of 6

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</tbody>
</table>
| KWL (15 min) – Pg. 30-31 | **Watch first half of First Generation**  
Chapters 1-5 (0:00-48:29) | **Watch second half of First Generation**  
Chapters 6-9 (48:29-End) | Discussion Question List 1 & 2 (10 min)  
– Pg. 20-21 | Discussion Question List 3 (10 min)  
– Pg. 21-22 |
| College Assumptions Test (10 min) – Pg. 32-35 | **Take notes during film:**  
First Generation Film Notes – Pg. 41-42 | **Take notes during film:**  
First Generation Film Notes – Pg. 41-42 | Discuss Homework: Acronyms and College Jargon (5 min)  
– Pg. 46-46 | Finish KWL Worksheet:  
Add three ideas to the KWL Chart in the “L” section (10)  
– Pg. 30-31 |
| College Assumptions Writing (15 min) – Pg. 36-37 | Introduce Homework (5 min) | Introduce Homework (5 min) | Journal Entry #2 (10 min)  
– Pg. 26-27 | Journal Entry #3 (10 min)  
– Pg. 26-27 |
| Discussion Question List A (10 min) – Pg. 20 | Introduce Homework (5 min) | Discussion Question List A (10 min) – Pg. 20 | Introduce Homework (5 min) | Introduce Homework (5 min) |
| Introduce Homework (5 min) | Watch first half of First Generation  
Chapters 1-5 (0:00-48:29) | Take notes during film:  
First Generation Film Notes – Pg. 41-42 | **Discussion Question List 1 & 2** (10 min)  
– Pg. 20-21 | **Discussion Question List 3** (10 min)  
– Pg. 21-22 |
| **Homework** | **Homework** | **Homework** | **Homework** | **Homework** |
| **Worksheet:** Parent Interview On College  
– Pg. 38-40 | **Worksheet:** Who Will Succeed? – Pg. 52-53 | Acronyms and College Jargon (30 min)  
– Pg. 43-44 | **Read:** “Know Your Schools”  
– Pg. 101-104 | **Include Worksheet:**  
College Inventory  
– Pg. 128-127 |
|  | Journal Entry #1  
– Pg. 26-27 | **Read:** “Putting Yourself to The Test”  
– Pg. 98-99 |  |  |
|  | **Read:** “Letter from Jess”  
– Pg. 100 | **Include Worksheet:**  
College Inventory  
– Pg. 128-127 |  |  |

*Class sessions are estimated at 45-50 minutes; however, if time allows we suggest using “Discussion Questions”, “Journal Prompts” or “Writing Prompts” to extend the session.*
# SIX-WEEK LESSON PLAN SCHEDULE

## WEEK 2 OF 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 6</th>
<th>Day 7</th>
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<tr>
<td>Journal Entry #4 (10 min) – Pg. 26-27</td>
<td>Profile of Choices Peer Share (25 min)</td>
<td>Discussion Question List 6 (10 min) – Pg. 23-24</td>
<td>Discussion Question List 7 (10 min) – Pg. 24</td>
<td>Discussion Question List 8 (10 min) – Pg. 24-25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Question List 4 (10 min) – Pg. 22-23</td>
<td>Discussion Question List 5 (10 min) – Pg. 23</td>
<td>Read: “Community College Advantage” (5 min) – Pg. 105</td>
<td>Creating a Thesis Statement (20 min) – Pg. 54-55</td>
<td>First Generation Student Comparison (20 min) – Pg. 58-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile of My College Choices (30 min) – Pg. 47-48</td>
<td>Journal Entry #5 – Pg. 26-27</td>
<td>Read: “Choosing a 4-Year University” (5 min) – Pg. 106</td>
<td>Responding to Naysayers (20 min) – Pg. 56-57</td>
<td>Quiz #2 (15 min) – Pg. 133-135</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Introduce Homework (5 min)</td>
<td>Community College Pros and Cons (20 min) – Pg. 49-51</td>
<td>Introduce Homework (5 min)</td>
<td>Introduce Homework (5 min)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finish: Profile of My College Choices – Pg. 47-48</td>
<td>Read: Letter from Soma – Pg. 107</td>
<td>Journal Entry #6 – Pg. 26-27</td>
<td>Journal Entry #7 – Pg. 26-27</td>
<td>Journal Entry #8 – Pg. 26-27</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Read: Letter from Cecilia – Pg. 108</td>
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<td>Read: Letter from Dontay – Pg. 109</td>
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</table>

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## SIX-WEEK LESSON PLAN SCHEDULE

### WEEK 3 OF 6

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Day 11</th>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Question List 9 (10 min) – Pg. 25</td>
<td>First Generation Student Evaluation (20 min) – Pg. 63-66</td>
<td>Timed Essay Prompt (25 min) – Pg. 71</td>
<td>The Million Dollar Scholarship: Persuasive Arguments (Day 1) (45 min) – Pg. 74-77</td>
<td>The Million Dollar Scholarship: Persuasive Arguments (Day 2) (30 min) – Pg. 74-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>First Generation</em> Identifying the Theme (25 min) – Pg. 60-62</td>
<td>Self-Evaluation (10 min) – Pg. 67-68</td>
<td>Introduce Tell Your Story (20 min) – Pg. 72-73</td>
<td>Quiz #3 (15 min) – Pg. 136-138</td>
<td>Introduce Homework (5 min)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal Entry #9 (10 min) – Pg. 26-27</td>
<td>Self-Evaluation Follow Up (10 min) – Pg. 69-70</td>
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<td>Introduce Homework (5 min)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worksheet: Guest Speaker Brainstorm – Pg. 83-85</td>
<td></td>
<td>Project: Tell Your Story – Pg. 72-73</td>
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**SIX-WEEK LESSON PLAN SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 4 OF 6**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Day 16</th>
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| Who Are You? (40 min)  
  – Pg. 78-79  
  Introduce homework (5 min)  
  Read: “Writing A Great College Essay” (10 min)  
  – Pg. 110  
  Personal Statement Outline (30 min)  
  – Pg. 80-81  
  Introduce homework: Writing A Personal Statement (5 min)  
  – Pg. 82  | Teachers’ Choice:  
  Guest Speaker  
  – Pg. 83-85  
  Or  
  Counselor Scavenger Hunt – Pg. 86-87  | Students Review  
  each other’s Personal Statements:  
  Peer Editing Form (25 min) – Pg. 124  
  Continue: Writing  
  Personal Statement – Final Draft (25 min)  | Personal Statements Due  
  Read Aloud Statements (45 min)  |

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</table>
| **FINISH:** Who Are You?  
  – Pg. 78-79  
  **Project:** Tell Your Story  
  – Pg. 72-73  | **FINISH:** Personal Statement Outline  
  – Pg. 80-81  
  **Write:** Personal Statement (1st Draft)  
  **Project:** Tell Your Story  
  – Pg. 72-73  | **Write:** Personal Statement (Final Draft)  
  **Project:** Tell Your Story  
  – Pg. 72-73  | **Project:** Tell Your Story  
  – Pg. 72-73  |

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## SIX-WEEK LESSON PLAN SCHEDULE

### WEEK 5 OF 6

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Day 21</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Read:</strong> “Acing The Interview” (5 min) – Pg. 111-112</td>
<td>“Tell Your Story” Presentations (first half of students) (45 min)</td>
<td>“Tell Your Story” Presentations (second half of students) (45 min)</td>
<td>College Fair (Step 1) (20 min) – Pg. 93-94</td>
<td>College Fair (Step 2-1) Research (45 Minutes) – Pg. 93-94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Practice (30 min) – Pg. 88-90</td>
<td>Interview Practice (30 min) – Pg. 88-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review requirements for “Tell Your Story” Presentations (15 min) – Pg. 72-73</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Project:</strong> Tell Your Story – Pg. 72-73</td>
<td><strong>Project:</strong> Tell Your Story – Pg. 72-73</td>
<td><strong>Read:</strong> “Making The Grade” – Pg. 113-115</td>
<td><strong>Project:</strong> College Fair – Pg. 94</td>
<td><strong>Project:</strong> College Fair – Pg. 94</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Worksheet:</strong> Backward Mapping My Goals – Pg. 91-92</td>
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**Section 2: Calendars** | 18
### SIX-WEEK LESSON PLAN SCHEDULE

**WEEK 6 OF 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 26</th>
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<tr>
<td>College Fair (Step 2-2) (45 min) – Pg. 93-94</td>
<td>College Fair (Step 3) (45 min) – Pg. 93-94</td>
<td>College Fair (Step 4) (45 min) – Pg. 93-94</td>
<td>College Fair (45 min—or longer)</td>
<td>Final Test (20 min) – Pg. 139-143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College Fair (Step 3)</strong> (45 min) – Pg. 93-94</td>
<td><strong>College Fair (Step 4)</strong> (45 min) – Pg. 93-94</td>
<td><strong>College Fair</strong> (45 min—or longer)</td>
<td><strong>College Fair</strong> (45 min—or longer)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>College Fair (Step 4)</strong> (45 min) – Pg. 93-94</td>
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<td><strong>College Fair (45 min—or longer)</strong></td>
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- **HOMEWORK**
  - **Project:** College Fair – Pg. 94
  - **Read:** “Finding The Cash” – Pg. 116-119
  - **Include Worksheet:** Financial Aid Questionnaire – Pg. 128

- **HOMEWORK**
  - **Project:** College Fair – Pg. 94
  - **Project:** College Fair – Pg. 94
  - **Project:** College Fair – Pg. 94
  - **Review notes from the unit—tomorrow will be the test**
  - **Take Home For Parents:** “Getting Your Child To College” – Pg. 120-121

*Class sessions are estimated at 45-50 minutes; however, if time allows we suggest using “Discussion Questions”, “Journal Prompts” or “Writing Prompts” to extend the session.*
FIRST GENERATION
A GUIDE TO COLLEGE

3

DISCUSSIONS, JOURNALS & PROMPTS
FIRST GENERATION: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

DIRECTIONS:

1. The lists will correspond with the chapters listed on Facilitator’s Guide (pg. 6). We suggest you pre-select questions from each list, as time will probably not allow you to discuss all of the questions provided. You may also choose to use List A prior to watching the film. See Options for Discussion for ways to use the questions.

2. If discussion time is limited, scan through all of the lists or simply use List A and B before and after the film respectively. You may also choose to use Chapter 9 as time allows. You may pause the film at certain points for Discussion Questions. See “Options for Discussion” for ways to use the questions.

OPTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Teacher-Led Whole Group Discussion – The teacher guides the discussion from the question bank. It may be valuable to make a copy of the questions to distribute to the class if you want students to think about the issues prior to viewing the film/chapters. The teacher leads the discussion or the students can pick where the discussion goes autonomously.

2. Focused Questions – Select three to five questions to focus on and write the questions on the board. Students can think about the questions as they view the film.

3. Focus Group-Led Whole Group Discussion – The teacher preselects five big questions and assigns a student to a focus group question (i.e. Focus Group #1 will answer “What types of colleges exist?” and Focus Group #2 will answer “What type of people go to college?”). The focus group is responsible for considering their one question during the film. Once the chapter/film is finished, ask a question to the class. Those who were given the question are asked to respond aloud. The rest of the class can respond once the focus group members have all responded. Continue this process until all questions are answered.

4. Small Group Discussion – Students sit in small groups with a list of questions to consider (you may post them on the board or provide a copy of the questions). In groups, the students will respond to the questions. With this method, we suggest strategically grouping students for the best discussion.

5. First Generation Focus Teams – Have the students sit in teams of 4 while viewing the film. Each student in the team will be assigned a First Generation Student (Cecilia, Dontay, Jess, or Soma) to take notes on. After viewing the film/chapter, the student is responsible to talk about the perspective/story of his/her First Generation Student.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Discussion Response – After the discussion, you may find there were differing views or new ideas shared. Use a journal reflection for students to reflect on the ideas shared. This will give less vocal students a chance to chime in with their views as well as to reflect on their peers’ views.

2. Extension Writing – Many of these questions can be used for journal prompts or timed writings. Simply provide the question to the students and have them write on the topic. For writing, use the rubric provided on page 123.

3. Online Discussions – In college, students will be expected to communicate formally to both other students and their professors via online communication (many schools utilize programs such as “Blackboard” where students are asked to respond in chat-rooms and discussion boards). Consider setting up a free blog or discussion board to discuss your class’ reactions to First Generation. Post questions and have the students respond to the post. You can assign this for homework if students have Internet access at home, or you may choose to use your school’s computer lab.

Tips for Quality Discussion: Discussion questions are one of the best ways to discover your class’ perceptions, assumptions, and biases. In many cases students will have differing opinions. Differing views can create a positive learning environment as students learn to articulate their beliefs and understandings. At times, however, discussion can lead to argument. To prevent this, encourage thoughtful discussion by setting guidelines for mutual respect prior to the discussion. We suggest having three basic rules: listen with respect, respond with respect, and contribute openly to the group.
FIRST GENERATION: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LIST A- (QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS BEFORE STUDENTS WATCH THE FILM)

1. What types of colleges exist?
2. What types of people go to college?
3. Why do students go to college?
4. What are your family members’ experiences with college?
5. Do you believe college can help improve your life? Why or why not?
6. What careers need a college education?
7. How does one pay for college?

LIST 1- (REFERENCE CHAPTER 1)

1. “It is the responsibility of the community, at the local, state, and national levels, to guarantee that financial barriers do not prevent any able and otherwise qualified person from receiving the opportunity for higher education. If college opportunities are restricted to those in higher income brackets, the way is open to the creation and perpetuation of a class society which has no place in the American way of life.” –President’s Commission on Higher Education, 1947. Do you believe America is classist in its view of higher education? Why?
2. How would free higher education (college) change our society?
3. Discuss the stories of the four students. What story is the most compelling?
4. What motivates the four students to gain a college experience?
5. What benefits do you think the First Generation students will gain by attending college?
6. Dontay takes three buses and two trains to get to school every morning. What does this tell you about Dontay’s commitment to his education?
7. Dontay is able to turn his life around after a difficult situation during his sophomore year. Is he the exception to the rule or can everyone make a change?
8. Dontay’s mother comes from a life of drugs. How might this influence Dontay?
9. Jess says she is surrounded by people who don’t appreciate their community, but she likes the community and is motivated to do well. What makes the difference between a person who is motivated and those who don’t seem to care?
10. Jess keeps good grades and is involved in student government. How will these choices give her an advantage when she applies for colleges?
11. What influences do you think Jess’ mom has on her life? Do you think it matters that her mom didn’t go to college? Why or why not?
12. Cecilia takes AP Courses. What are AP Courses and how can they help you prepare for college?
13. Cecilia is in AVID, a program that supports students to explore and get into college. What types of programs do you know that support you at your school?
14. Cecilia’s father was deported from the U.S. and Cecilia is uncertain of her future with her family. How do situations distract from college focus?
15. Soma’s mom is a first-generation American. How is being the first person to come to America similar to becoming the first person to start college?

16. Soma’s father died when he was a sophomore in high school. How might this change his experience in high school?

17. Soma’s mom doesn’t know how college payments work. How might this become an obstacle for Soma in the future?

18. Of all the stories, which student do you have the most empathy for?

19. Of all the stories, which student do you relate to the most?

20. Of all the stories, who do you think will succeed in reaching his/her college dream?

**LIST 2- (REFERENCE CHAPTER 2)**

1. What have you heard about the SAT?

2. What are the best ways to study for big tests such as the SAT?

3. What have you heard about the ACT?

4. One expert says, “Low-income students don’t have access to… test prep classes.” How does this exclusion provide an unequal playing field when it comes to college admissions?

5. When looking at the graph about SAT Scores and Family Income, you may know exactly where your family falls, while others may have no idea how much money their family earns per year. Many parents do not discuss income with their children. Why do you think this is so?

6. One expert said, “Rich kids have more opportunities.” Is he right? Why or why not?

7. The government provides free education for students from grades K-12. Should the government do the same for college? Why or why not?

8. In many states, the government provides free preschool education for families who are considered low-income. Should the government do the same for college?

9. Jess’ friends discuss ways to pay for college. One friend urges the other, “Don’t take out student loans!” What is her reasoning? Is she right?

10. What have you heard about the FAFSA?

**LIST 3- (REFERENCE CHAPTER 3)**

1. List the qualities that are required to do well in sports. Are they the same qualities that are needed to do well in college? Why or why not?

2. Are the cultural expectations placed on Cecilia and Soma justified? Why or why not?

3. Cecilia talks about the expectations placed on women in her family. How do the educational opportunities for women in the US compare to other countries?

4. Jess reflects on the start of her senior year. She says the idea of school being over is scary. Why is senior year considered so important?

5. The advisor who gives Jess her schedule says Jess should come and see her about scholarship applications. Jess seems apprehensive and says the advisor will be too busy. How is Jess building a wall around herself?

6. Dontay is excited about his season of football and is considered a significant member of the team. How can this help or hinder his college goals?
7. What does Cecilia’s choice to stay in the U.S. say about her character?

8. What fallout may occur because of Cecilia’s choice to stay in the U.S.?

9. In order to succeed in reaching the college dream, everyone needs support. How are Cecilia’s friends, the Parkers, acting as a support system for her?

10. When Cecilia says she “doesn’t feel by [herself]”, what does she mean? How do you think this will improve or lessen her chances to go to college?

11. People like Dr. Victor Thompson are considered philanthropists (those who work to help others). How can philanthropists help break the college barrier for low-income students?

12. Dr. William G. Tierney says America is afraid to deal with issues of our classist society. What evidence do you see in our culture that there are different classes of people?

13. J.B. Schramm says the best way to break the cycle of poverty is to give low-income students a college degree. What opportunities do you think are afforded to those with college degrees?

14. Why are counselors hired to work at high schools/junior highs?

15. Cecilia’s counselor tries to give solutions for Cecilia’s college costs, but she says, “I’m on my own,” meaning she has to pay for it all and has no family support. What other solutions does Cecilia have?

16. Cecilia wants to go to UCLA, a very competitive university in the California system. Should the counselor have encouraged her to keep this dream or directed her to a less competitive school?

17. Cecilia’s counselor tells her she needs to focus on her personal statement, an essay where she will discuss her personal qualities and accomplishments. Having heard part of Cecilia’s story, what would you say are her strengths and accomplishments she should write about?

18. One expert says low-income students are disadvantaged because there is a lack of parent support, due to ignorance or inability. Where are other places students can go to gain the support necessary to get into college?

19. Dr. William G. Tierney says colleges, for the most part, are public territory. Have you ever gone to a college campus? If so, describe what you saw when you were there. (Think about sports you may have seen or field trips.)

20. The students discuss a variety of colleges such as public universities (UCLA or UTexas—4 year universities), historically black colleges (Howard or Morehouse), and local colleges (including community colleges—2 year, Junior Colleges). What are the benefits of each of these?

21. When Jess meets with her guidance counselor, the counselor shares Jess’ class standing. How can knowing your class standing build or break your confidence?

22. Jess is worried about moving away. How might fear hold Jess back from achieving her college goals?

23. When considering college and all that goes into applying to attend, it can be overwhelming. Is it better to wait and consider these issues once you are a senior in high school or start early? Why?

LIST 4- (REFERENCE CHAPTER 4)

1. Cecilia is her school’s fastest runner. What opportunities will this afford her?

2. Cecilia met a coach from the local community college. What benefit is there to attending a community college for a low-income student?

3. How are the communities of the four First Generation students different?

4. What makes the communities of the four First Generation students similar?
5. Don'tay lives in a very dangerous area with a high crime rate. How can Don'tay use this as motivation?

6. Don'tay meets with his counselor for a “Grad-Check” (a meeting to ensure Don'tay is on track to graduate in the spring). During the meeting she says a higher level science class, Physics, is highly recommended. Don'tay doesn't have to take the class, but it is suggested so he can be competitive to get into the college of his choice. What are the benefits and the drawbacks if Don'tay enrolls in the science class?

7. How is Don'tay’s counselor supporting him in his college dreams?

8. Dr. William G. Tierney shared that at a low-income school in states like California, the college counselor to student ratio is 1 counselor for every 800 students. What problems might this create?

9. Soma’s counselor asks him what he wants to do after college, but at this point he is already in the midst of his senior year. What problems might this cause? What options may not be available to him and why?

10. Soma wants to attend a 4-year University, but he isn’t sure what is required. What are some solutions to solve this problem?

11. Soma’s counselor gave him a booklet with a listing of all the universities in his state. What are some other places Soma could look to learn about the schools?

**LIST 5- (REFERENCE CHAPTER 5)**

1. Don'tay may have to make a big decision: should he play in the big game which could lead to an important victory or take the ACT which will qualify him for certain colleges? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both.

2. One of the biggest mistakes students make is “being in the now” and not preparing for the future. What problems can arise if you aren’t prepared for the future?

3. Jess assumes that since a topic is not brought up with her father, it is off limits. What is the danger in this type of thinking?

4. Jess’ father talks to her about alternate plans for college, other than attending a 4-year University. Is it a good idea to make a ‘Plan B’ or is she setting herself up for failure?

5. Cecilia’s “family”, the Parkers, are moving to Tennessee. Cecilia needs to make a decision to go with them or move to Mexico with her mother. Given the circumstances, what would you do and why?

6. One expert says for every one dollar invested in education, we get a three-dollar return. Why might this statistic motivate students?

7. Soma regrets not talking with his counselor earlier in his high school career. He has learned the college application process can be tricky and involves some up-front costs. If he doesn’t apply, he can’t get into college. What should he do now?

8. When Soma sits with his mother and discusses his options for college, his mother seems worried about his choice to move out. How might Soma discuss the benefits of his decision to go to college with his mom?

**LIST 6- (REFERENCE CHAPTER 6)**

1. Cecilia’s new SAT score made her a competitive applicant to the top 50 schools in the country, but she doesn’t realize it. Who might she have spoken with to better understand her achievement?

2. Cecilia’s AVID teacher says Cecilia’s hurdle will be “giving of herself” in her personal statement. If you were Cecilia, what story would you tell in the essay to UCLA?

3. If given the option, should Cecilia take the full-ride scholarship to the local Cal State Bakersfield or go to her dream school, UCLA, with minimal or no financial aid? Why?

4. Jess is accepted to a local university, but doesn’t think much of it. Should she celebrate or are some colleges not as important as others? Why?
5. An application fee to a university can prevent some students from applying. What are some ways to ensure you can still apply?

6. One expert cited that the average college debt is almost $20,000. Some see that cost and decide not to go to college, assuming the cost will set them back during their “younger” years. Is the assumption correct? Why or why not?

7. Should a student count on getting scholarships for athletics?

8. Dontay had a conversation with his counselor prior to talking with his mom. The narrator tells us Dontay was uninformed about the cost of private versus public universities. Speculate why this confusion happened.

9. Dontay says he wants to be sure he can “get out of here.” What seems to be motivating Dontay’s college dream?

10. Dontay’s mother is concerned over how much the college tuition will cost, but says Dontay will make it work because he is her “responsible child.” How do you think his mother’s perspective influences Dontay?

11. What if Dontay’s mother had told him, “You are irresponsible and you won’t be able to pay for college?” How might Dontay’s attitude change?

12. How do the parents of the four First Generation students affect their decisions about college? Which parents would you classify as having a positive influence and which as negative? Give evidence to support your claims.

LIST 7- (REFERENCE CHAPTER 7)

1. Cecilia confesses she hasn’t finished her application to UCLA; she has less than one week to finish. What advice would you give her at this stage of the process?

2. Jess learns she is eligible to apply to any 4-year University in her state and is surprised. Why do you think she didn’t realize she was eligible? Also, what does this tell us about Jess’ potential?

3. Jess’ mom talks openly with Jess about money and the costs of college. Should her mom discuss these topics with her or is Jess better not knowing the burdens college can bring on a parent?

4. Jess’ boyfriend tells Jess she could go to a local college versus her dream schools in order to save money. Should she take his advice? Why or why not?

5. Soma is well connected to his community, in particular to his family’s cultural traditions. How could Soma use this to help him with college?

6. The school year is moving on and Dontay has not filled out any applications. What support systems should he call upon to help him with this process?

7. One expert claims many low-income students at public schools get a competent education; however, they do not get the same education private college-prep schools give. Why is there such a disparity between these two types of schools? How can this be changed?

8. At times, our scope is limited to what is around us in our community. How can you become globally minded and more cultured?

9. By the end of this chapter 7, Cecilia has moved out of state with her best friend’s family. How will this change potentially affect her dream of going to college? What can Cecilia do to change her situation?

LIST 8- (REFERENCE CHAPTER 8)

1. Jess’ mom suggests by living in a small town, they are not able to know what to do in regards to college. What advice would you give Jess’ mom to learn more about college?

2. Jess’ Assistant Principal, John Brown, says the biggest battle first generation students have is the fear of the unknown. Do you think he is right or is there something bigger to battle?
3. What surprised you about the awards and scholarships that were given to Jess in the awards ceremony?

4. Jess decides to go to a school based on getting a job right away. Discuss whether or not this is a good decision.

5. Often parents say they are sad their kids are going to college because they are “growing up”. Why is this logic unfounded?

6. Soma discovered he didn’t have the classes required to apply to the college of his dreams. How then should you plan in order to get to the college of your dreams?

7. Paying for college can feel like a huge burden, especially when coming from a low-income home. What are some of the ways students can pay for school?

8. All four of the students have regrets about “what could have happened”. If they were able to go back in time and give themselves advice, what might they suggest? Consider each student.

**LIST 9- (REFERENCE CHAPTER 9)**

1. Dontay's guidance counselor acts as a support system and advocate for Dontay during his financial aid crisis. Who in your community can do the same for you?

2. Should you select a school based on close friends or boyfriends/girlfriends? Why or why not?

3. Cecilia believes she has changed her family’s perspective on college. What about Cecilia do you think made the biggest impression on her mother and other family members?

4. Dontay made a decision to turn his life around; can you identify a moment in your life when you made a decision to make a change in your life?

5. Nine months after graduation, Jess and Cecilia share regrets. What do you gain from their stories?

6. Only 21% of low-income students who start at a community college will transfer to a 4-year University. Of those students who transfer, only 1 out of 4 will earn a degree in six years. Speculate why this is the case. What do you think will become of Soma?

**LIST B- (QUESTIONS FOR AFTER STUDENTS WATCH THE FILM.)**

1. At the end of the film, with a 4.0 in hand, Dontay says it is possible to change. What change do you want to make after watching this film?

2. Who is the hero of this film? What makes this person heroic?

3. What influences in the students’ lives deter them from going to college?

4. What influences in the students’ lives encourage them to pursue their college dreams?

5. What cultural issues are presented in the film?

6. How are the students in the film similar to one another?

7. Which student is at the greatest advantage in the film? And adversely, which student is at the greatest disadvantage?

8. Evaluate our current college system. Does it work? What needs to be changed? Why do you think college education is not funded like K-12 education?

9. Which student do you relate to the most? Why?

10. If these students are successful in college, how do you think their lives will change?

11. Do you think the filmmakers filming the students’ high school lives changed their outcomes? Why or why not?

12. Are those who go to college better off than those who don’t? Why or why not?
JOURNAL ENTRIES

PURPOSE:

- To determine central themes and ideas
- To summarize key points
- To improve writing and thinking skills
- To reflect on new knowledge
- To improve fluency

HOW-TO:

1. Journal Prompts 1-9 are aligned with the chapters listed in the Facilitator’s Guide (pg. 6). Therefore, you may refer to chapter 1 and the corresponding time in the film for Journal Prompt #1.

2. Provide the students with the journal prompts (You may choose to provide them with a printed list at the start of the unit or write the prompts you want on the board and assign them as desired).

3. Ask students to write on a blank sheet of paper or in a spiral bound journal. You may want to give a time limit or length limit to the assignment.

VARIATIONS:

Discussion: You may wish to discuss the topics as a class or in a small group prior to having the students write.

Daily Discussion: After completing the journal entries for homework, give students time to discuss their writing in peer groups. This discussion may inspire new ideas or help correct faulty assumptions.

Digital Discussion: If students have access, consider setting up a digital discussion board or a blog where students respond to the posts online.

Essay: Assign one of the journal prompts as a formal essay. Use the rubric on page 123 for grading criteria.

Revisions: Have the students select a journal entry to revise in class. Have the students use the Peer Editing Form on page 124 when editing.

Full Journal Evaluation: Evaluate the journals on completeness by using the rubric on page 123. It is recommended to make comments and notes to students as they write.
#1- INTRODUCTION

**Prompt:** Imagine you are asked to give an introductory profile of your life in *First Generation*. Describe yourself, your interests, your family background, and your passions. Be sure to list enough details so your journal prompt won’t look identical to your friends’ and peers’.

#2- LEARNING

**Prompt:** Learning about college acronyms and jargon can be a key to understanding the college system. Write about a time when you learned about something that was a key to understanding something new. Consider writing about sports, art, dance, academics, or technology. How did learning new information help open the door to understanding?

#3- OBSTACLES

**Prompt:** Everyone has hurdles or obstacles to overcome. Describe an obstacle you or someone you personally know overcame. What was the obstacle and how was it beat? What did the person learn/gain from overcoming the obstacle?

#4 DREAMS

**Prompt:** Discuss your personal hopes and dreams for your future. Try to include as much detail as possible. How long will it take you to reach your dreams? How do you get to your chosen end? Who is with you? Who do you think will help you get there?

#5- SUPPORT

**Prompt:** It is important to share your personal journey to college with another person, whether he/she is a counselor, coach, teacher, parent or friend. Describe the person who you can talk to about college dreams. What qualities make this person someone you can trust and rely on? Tell about an experience when you were able to trust this person.

#6- DREAM COLLEGE

**Prompt:** Imagine you are asked to create the greatest college on the planet. What would the college look like and what would set it apart from others? Be sure to discuss its location, majors, population, and qualities that make it the perfect school.

#7- REGRETS

**Prompt:** Whether we forgot to complete an assignment or were too afraid to ride a rollercoaster, we all have regrets. Write about a moment in your life that you regret. What prevented you from doing or not doing something you should have? What can you learn from this experience?

#8- SKILLS

**Prompt:** All of us are experts or skilled at something special. Write about a skill you have that sets you apart from others. It can be athletics, academics, art, help-skills, or any other talent or ability. How did you acquire the skill? What did it take to learn the skill? Discuss how you plan to use your skill to benefit yourself or others.

#9- SUCCESS

**Prompt:** In your opinion, who was the most successful in the film *First Generation*? What makes the student successful? Specifically, what qualities or supports do you think helped the student reach his/her goal(s)? Describe what you can learn from the student.
WRITING AND SPEAKING PROMPTS

Below is a list of essay and writing topics you may wish to employ throughout the study. Use the essays for timed writings, out of class formal essays, journal entries, or even formal speeches. Use the rubric on page 123. We suggest handing out the rubric on the first day of the essay writing so students can self-evaluate their work prior to submission.

In some cases, you may wish to recommend length of the essay (i.e. “In a five paragraph essay…”, “In a 500 word essay…”, or “In a 2-paged, typed essay…”).

1. Research an individual who graduated from college. The person can be famous or may live in your neighborhood. Write a biography of the person detailing his/her college experience. Be sure to include details of how the individual was accepted to college, paid for college, and used his/her college education.

2. Describe the ideal college. You needn’t name the college; however, you will want to describe what attributes make up the perfect college. Define the school culture, education, and experience you hope to gain at the college of your choosing.

3. Write an expository text on a college you have researched. In your essay, describe and define what makes this college unique.

4. Write a persuasive essay about a college you have researched. Persuade the reader why the college is the best college for you. Defend your position with evidence, quotations, and logical reasoning. Address counterclaims in your essay while still maintaining your persuasive tone.

5. Write a formal business letter to the college of your choosing. Tell the college about yourself and request material to be sent in response to your letter. (Note- Extra credit can be given for those who get responses to their letters!)

6. Write a friendly letter to a family member or friend who has attended college. Discuss what you have learned thus far in the First Generation curriculum and request information from the family member as to his/her views on college.

7. Research a college campus and write a creative narrative that describes your imaginary visit to the college. Use specific details and areas of the campus to paint a picture for the reader. Include dialogue and sensory details you would expect to find on the campus.

8. Imagine your school principal has a $50,000 scholarship to award to one student in the school. The award will go to the student who can best persuade the principal that he/she is most worthy of the scholarship. Your principal says she wants to hear about your personal achievements and/or obstacles overcome. Marshal evidence and write a persuasive essay that will win you the scholarship. Be sure to use real life experiences and examples as your principal (and teacher) will know if you have fabricated evidence.

9. Write a technical manual that describes and defines how one can research information on a college. Be sure to include definitions and examples as well as anticipate readers’ problems, mistakes, and misunderstandings.
KWL

Estimated Lesson Time: 15 minutes

PURPOSE:
A KWL chart is a great way to activate your students’ prior learning and focus the discussions you have during the study. In addition to being used at the beginning of the study, it serves as a great review after viewing the film when students fill in the “L” to demonstrate their new understandings.

- To determine central themes and ideas
- To direct and assess learning
- To evaluate prior knowledge

HOW-TO:
1. Pass out the KWL worksheet to each student.

2. Tell the students this is their chance to show what they think they know about college. Have the students fill in the “K”, what they KNOW about college. Students should be encouraged to write in fragments or bullet points. Give them at least three minutes to complete this step. Move around the room and see if students are stuck. If they are stuck, suggest they list schools they are familiar with or have seen (i.e. Sports, visits, local schools, etc.).

3. Now have the students move on to the next section, “W”. Have the students write at least three concepts they Want to know about college. In some cases the list may be similar to the “K” section as students are not certain about their assumptions.

4. Next, have the students pair up with each other. Give them two minutes to share their ideas.

5. After sharing, have students write new ideas they gained by sharing either “K” or “W”. Give them one minute to complete this addition.

6. Once the first two sections are complete, have students share their ideas with the whole class. This process can be a quick check with a few students or a more in-depth discussion with the whole class.

7. Tell the students their questions and assumptions from the “K” and the “W” will be the guide for the discussion and unit of study. Encourage your students to ask questions that will help them get their “W” section answered.

8. You may choose to collect the worksheets and review them after the first day or have the students hold their papers until the end of the unit when they will complete “L”.

9. At the end of the unit have the students fill out the “L” section, demonstrating what they have Learned in the unit. This can serve as an assessment tool as it has pre-assessment and summative assessment data.

VARIATIONS:

Group Version: Have a large poster display at the front of the class and conduct a verbal KWL with the class. Have one student act as the scribe and write down the ideas the class shared.

Pair-and-Share: Get students talking by having the students complete the entire process in pairs. Early discussion about college with peers will lead to deeper discussions later on in the curriculum.

Writing Variation: Rather than the students listing their ideas in bullet format, have the students write their ideas in essay or paragraph form. You may wish to use the “College Assumptions” worksheet on page 37.

Add a Group Chart: Have the students complete the process above. When the students share their ideas with the whole class, create a class chart in addition to their individual forms.

Regular Review: At the end of each day’s study, have the students pull out their KWL charts to see if their questions/assumptions were answered. If so, have students report this information on their charts. If not, encourage the students to continue exploring until the question/assumption is answered.

Assessment: This worksheet can be used as pre- and post-test assessment.
**KWL**

**Directions:** Fill in the first two sections of the graphic organizer. The K stands for “Know”, in this section list what you think you know about college (try to list as many topics as you can). The W stands for “Want to know”. In this section, list the topics you would like to learn about (list at least three topics). You will wait to fill out the last section of the KWL until the end of the unit. The L stands for “Learned”, in this section list all the topics you have learned about.
COLLEGE ASSUMPTIONS TEST

Estimated Lesson Time: 10 minutes

PURPOSE:
- To determine central themes and ideas
- To assess learning
- To direct learning and thinking
- To evaluate prior knowledge

HOW-TO:
1. Read this introduction to the class. You may want to have an initial discussion on assumptions people make in their everyday lives or things you have personally assumed.

   Have you ever assumed something about going college? Most students do. Whether a student assumes he doesn’t have enough money to attend an Ivy League school, assumes his parents are saving up for his room and board, or assumes the only good colleges are found on the east coast; most students have assumptions about college.

   Some of the assumptions may turn out to be correct, while a majority of assumptions turn out to be myths. These myths often prevent students from opportunities and college acceptance. In order to better understand college, it is imperative students understand the myths and truths about college and college acceptance.

2. Pass out the worksheet. Students should write a “T” for true and an “F” for false. Give students 3-5 minutes to fill out the form.

3. Upon completion of the worksheet you may wish to go over the answers (below) or have the students act as researchers and hunt for the correct answer to the statements as they complete the unit of study.

4. A version of this test is used as the Final Assessment (see pages 139-143).

   **True** 1. You can take the SATs more than once.

   **Rationale**- You can retake the SAT as many times as you’d like. That is why it is valuable to take your test early on so you can, if needed, take the test again. Your best scores will be sent to the colleges of your choosing. The SAT, however, can be costly; so check with your college counselor to see if you qualify for a fee waiver.

   **True** 2. Many colleges require you to submit a written “Personal Statement”.

   **Rationale**- Many colleges require an essay where you describe yourself and your achievements. It is important for you to be honest and to not exaggerate nor underestimate your qualities. Colleges use these essays to evaluate potential students to try to find the best students for their campuses. This is your chance to show your unique qualities and traits.

   **False** 3. Private universities are only for the wealthy.

   **Rationale**- In many cases, private universities offer more financial support than their public counterparts. Many students are surprised to find that in some cases private universities offer significantly reduced tuition, loan-free education or full-ride college scholarships based on family income.

   **False** 4. All colleges require you to pay the tuition costs all at once.

   **Rationale**- Most colleges understand that students are not able to pay all the tuition costs up front and will work with you to establish a payment plan. Regardless of income, all families should apply for Financial Aid to help pay for college costs. Visit the Student and Parents Resources on gocollegenow.org to find additional tools and resources to navigate the financial aid process.
False  5. The fees listed on college websites and publications are the fees for all students.

Rationale- Depending on your family’s income, your fees could be greatly reduced. For instance, if your family earns under $60,000 a year as a household, your fees could be reduced exponentially and college could even be free!

False  6. University deadlines are flexible; if you discuss your situation with the college, they will allow late entries.

Rationale- Welcome to the real world. Most universities don’t care that your cat just died, nor do they want to hear about how your computer got a virus and your printer broke. Sorry, colleges will honor those students who get their applications in on time. If you are late, you won’t be able to enroll for the first term. You may, however, be able to enroll during a different term.

False  7. You have to have a 4.0 to get into a college or university.

Rationale- Colleges and Universities aren’t necessarily looking for 4.0 students. Colleges look for students who have shown effort, achievement or have special skills or abilities; grades are just one of the factors colleges consider. Note: This does not give you credence to slack off—grades are important, but they are not the end-all for some colleges.

True  8. Going to community college can help students gain access to a 4-year university if their high school GPA is low.

Rationale- Some students will decide they want to go to college, but their GPAs (Grade Point Averages) are too low. After high school, these students may do well to enter a community college where they can start fresh and gain college credits. In some cases, a community college will have special partnerships with 4-year Universities. If you follow the community colleges’ programs for transfer, you can gain guaranteed access to certain universities.

False  9. Colleges are just looking for well-rounded students; colleges are not looking for specialists.

Rationale- Many universities share they aren’t looking for students who do everything, rather they would like to find students who have special interests or skills. For instance, if a student wants to become a doctor, he/she should try to enroll in high school education courses in science (i.e. AP Chemistry, AP Biology, etc.) and involve themselves in clubs that support this major.

True  10. If your family is considered low-income, you may see reductions in your tuition costs.

Rationale- As stated prior, there are many benefits on a local and federal level to help lower-income families send their children to college at more affordable rates. Regardless of income, all families should apply for Financial Aid to help pay for college costs. Visit the Student and Parents Resources on gocollegenow.org to find additional tools and resources to navigate the financial aid process.

False  11. Most students earn a full-ride scholarship to major universities.

Rationale- A majority of students on college campuses have some sort of financial aid; however, there are some highly selective universities like Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, and Princeton where students coming from families that earn less than $60,000 will receive a full-ride scholarship to attend. Visit the U.S. Department of Education’s “Calculator Center” (http://collegecost.ed.gov/netpricecenter.aspx) to input your college or university and find out how much it will actually cost to attend.

True  12. It is possible to get scholarships in areas other than athletics.

Rationale- There are scholarships for a myriad of activities; athletics is just one. Leadership, Art, Science, Religious affiliations, GPA, or simply being of a certain heritage can all earn you scholarships and students can start applying as early as middle school! Visit the Student and Parents Resources on gocollegenow.org to sign up for scholarship alerts and learn more about applying for scholarships.

False  13. School counselors will always tell you what you need to know in order to get into schools.

Rationale- In some cases school counselors may not know what type of college you hope to enroll in. If you want to get into a Four-Year University and your counselor assumes you are going to enroll at a Community College, the counselor may not advise you to take certain classes necessary to be accepted into a particular college.
14. Talking with someone who has gone to college can be helpful for students to learn about college life.

Rationale: Talking with someone who has gone to college can help you understand what needs to be done to get into college and do well. Even listening to someone who dropped out or didn’t go to college can help you learn what didn’t work.

15. If your parents didn’t go to college, you won’t get into a college.

Rationale: As you’ll see in the film, there are first generation students all over the world. Just because your parents didn’t go to college doesn’t prevent you from going to college.

VARIATIONS:

Self-Reflection: Students may be able to assess their own learning. Have students fill out the worksheet prior to viewing the film. After the unit, have the students look at their worksheet and annotate their own answers, noting where they made faulty assumptions or were correct.

Regular Review: At the end of each day’s study, have the students pull out their College Assumptions Test to see if the statements were answered. If so, have students report this information on their worksheets. If not, encourage the students to continue exploring until the assumption is answered.
COLLEGE ASSUMPTIONS TEST

Directions: Prior to watching the film fill in this worksheet on college assumptions. Write T for True and F for False. Some of the answers will be found in the film, while others will be shared by your teacher throughout.

1. You can take the SATs more than once. (T/F)
2. Many colleges require you to submit a written "Personal Statement". (T/F)
3. Private universities are only for the wealthy. (T/F)
4. Colleges require you to pay the tuition costs all at once. (T/F)
5. The fees listed on college websites and publications are the fees for all students. (T/F)
6. College deadlines are flexible; if you discuss your situation with the college, they will allow late entries. (T/F)
7. You have to have a 4.0 to get into a college or university. (T/F)
8. Going to community college can help students gain access to a 4-year university if their high school GPA is low. (T/F)
9. Colleges are just looking for well-rounded students; colleges are not looking for specialists. (T/F)
10. If your family is considered low-income, you may see reductions in your tuition costs. (T/F)
11. Most students earn a full-ride scholarship to major universities. (T/F)
12. It is possible to get scholarships in areas other than athletics. (T/F)
13. School counselors will always tell you what you need to know in order to get into schools. (T/F)
14. Talking with someone who has gone to college can be helpful for students to learn about college life. (T/F)
15. If your parents didn’t go to college, you won’t go to college. (T/F)
COLLEGE ASSUMPTIONS WRITING

Estimated Lesson Time: 15 minutes

PURPOSE:
An introductory journal-write is a great way for students to explore assumptions and feelings about college. Through this process students will define their experiences and give you clues as to their misunderstandings.

In addition to an introduction, this page can be used as a summative assessment. Have students do the activity twice, prior to and after the film, in order to demonstrate how much knowledge your students gain through the study.

• To evaluate prior knowledge
• To direct learning
• To evaluate prior knowledge and assumptions
• To write informative texts
• To develop a range of writing

HOW-TO:
Prior to the Film:
1. Tell the students they will have 10-15 minutes to write on the prompt.
2. Pass out the worksheet or post the prompt on the board.
3. Have students write as much as they can in the time limit.
4. Collect the work and assess their assumptions.

After the Film:
1. Remind the students of the pre-test given at the start of the unit.
2. Tell the students they will complete the same test, this time demonstrating how much knowledge they have gained.
3. Have students write as much as they can in the time limit.
4. Collect the work and assess their learning.

VARIATIONS:
Homework: Have students complete this assignment as an untimed homework response. Collect the response and pass it back upon completion of the study. Then have the students repeat the process demonstrating their new knowledge.

Self-Reflection: Students may assess their own learning. Have students fill out the worksheet prior to viewing the film. After the unit, have the students look at their worksheet and annotate their own writing, noting where they made faulty assumptions or were correct. In addition, have students add new information they learned from the study.

Assessment: This worksheet can be used as pre- and post-test assessment.
COLLEGE ASSUMPTIONS WRITING

Directions: Write what you know about what it takes to get to college. Write as much as possible on how you can pay for college, what classes are required to get into colleges, what grades you have to earn, or any other details you can think of regarding what it will take to get to college.

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PARENT INTERVIEW ON COLLEGE

PURPOSE:

- To conduct a short research investigation based on specific questions
- To write an informative text
- To produce clear writing appropriate to interview questions and responses
- To help students begin conversations about college with their parents and peers
- To help students understand their families' beliefs and biases about college

HOW-TO:

1. Tell the students prior to making the film, the filmmakers created a list of questions to ask the students in the film.

2. More often than not, the filmmakers try to come up with open-ended questions (questions where the interviewee responds with more than a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’) as opposed to closed-ended questions (questions that only require a one word answer such as ‘yes’ or ‘no’).

3. Now tell the students they will act like the filmmakers and create a list of questions for their own parents. These questions should be designed to learn about their parents’ beliefs and opinions on college.

4. Have a short group discussion on possible questions students can ask their parents.

5. Pass out the question form to the students and have them begin listing questions.

6. If students are struggling to come up with questions, you can provide them with some of these suggested questions.

   a. Did you go to college? If so, where?
   b. Who in our family went to college and where did they go?
   c. What do you like about me going to college?
   d. What makes you nervous about me going to college?
   e. What type of schooling do you expect me to have?
   f. How would sending me to college help our family in the long run?
   g. How much money are you willing to give me toward my college education, if any?
   h. Do you know what financial aid is available to help me attend college? What would you like me to learn more about: grants, scholarships, loans, work study?
   i. What are your attitudes toward community colleges?
   j. How long do you expect college to take me if I were to start right after senior year of high school?
   k. Is a college education mandatory for everyone?
   l. Who will get to pick the college I attend?
   m. Does gender matter in terms of who goes to college?
   n. Would you like me to go to a local college and live at home or move on/near campus?
   o. Is there a certain religious school you want me to attend?

7. In most cases, teachers choose to have the students conduct the interviews with their parents. If this is the case, allow for two days for students to conduct the interviews so they are sure to have a chance to meet up with a parent.
VARIATIONS:

**Homework:** Have students conduct the interviews with their parents. If you know this will be difficult for the students, you can give extra credit for those who have the answers. In addition, for those struggling to get parental responses, have the students interview other community members (such as teachers, pastors, or rabbis) on these issues.

**Discussion:** When students have the answers to their questions, conduct group discussions on family beliefs or meet one-on-one with students to discuss family values. (Note: some students will have difficult home lives, so it is important to group the class so students feel safe sharing.)
PARENT INTERVIEW ON COLLEGE

Directions: Write a list of questions to ask your parent(s)/guardian(s) about college. Think of ten questions that will tell you about your family’s history with college, attitudes about college, or beliefs about education as a whole.

1) ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2) ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3) ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

4) ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

5) ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

6) ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

7) ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

8) ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

9) ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

10) _____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
    _____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
FIRST GENERATION FILM NOTES

PURPOSE:

- To organize thinking
- To reflect on ideas

HOW-TO:

1. Prior to viewing the film, pass out the worksheet.

2. As students view the film, have them make notes in the two sections. Tell the students how you plan on dividing up the film (i.e. 1st half / 2nd half or 9 separate chapters, etc.) so they can best plan to use the worksheet.

3. After the entire film is finished, have students share what they learned. Discuss ideas shared in a large group or small groups.

4. Have students share questions they still have. Discuss.

VARIATIONS:

Research Question: The film may have inspired a research question. Have the students form a research question inspired by the film. Have the students use this research question as a basis for a research paper, presentation, or discussion for a later time.

Journal: Have students journal on the ideas they have learned as well as questions they still have.
FIRST GENERATION FILM NOTES

Directions: While watching the film, fill in this graphic organizer. Be sure you have at least three ideas in each section.

Three concepts I learned about are...

1. ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Three concepts I am confused about or still have questions about are...

1. ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
ACRONYMS AND COLLEGE JARGON

Estimated Lesson Time: 30 minutes

PURPOSE:
- To introduce students to college terms
- To gather relevant information
- To utilize research skills using technology

HOW-TO:
1. Pass out the worksheet.
2. Have students use computers to research these terms (in most cases, students can use a search engine such as “Google” to find the meaning of the terms).
3. Collect and score the results.

   1. SAT- A college admissions exam that tests knowledge of critical reading, writing, and mathematics.
   2. GPA- Grade Point Average
   3. FAFSA-Free Application for Federal Student Aid
   4. ACT- A college admissions exam that consists of subject area tests in English, mathematics, reading, and science.
   5. JC- Junior College
   6. 4-Year- A university or college that awards bachelor’s degrees
   7. AVID- Advancement via Individual Development; a program offered by many high schools and junior high schools to prepare students for college
   8. AP- Advanced Placement; classes offered in many high schools. Students take a summative test to gain college credit.
   9. Undergrad-an education level that gains a first level or tertiary degree
   10. General Ed-general education classes that students have to take such as English, math and science
   11. AA or AS- Associate Degrees- Association of Arts or Association of Science; also called a 2-year degree
   12. BA or BS- Bachelor Degrees-Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science; also called a 4-year degree
   13. Major- area of specialization in college; often linked to your career or future plans
   14. Minor- secondary area of specialization often when a student links related electives in a meaningful way

VARIATIONS:

Experts: Assign a term to one student or teams of students in the class. Students then research terms and learn all they can about the topic. Next have the student(s) create a poster on the topic. The students then present the information on the topic. While students present, the rest of the class fills out the worksheet. Display the posters around the room for further reference.

Limited Computers?: If computers are limited, complete the form collectively by either reading out the answers to the class or having students do the searches in front of the group.
ACRONYMS AND COLLEGE JARGON

Directions: Sometimes people who talk about getting ready for college sound like they are speaking a foreign language. Use this worksheet to help decode the different acronyms or terms you’ll need to know for college.

1. SAT ____________________________________________

2. GPA ____________________________________________

3. FAFSA __________________________________________

4. ACT ____________________________________________

5. JC ______________________________________________

6. 4-Year __________________________________________

7. AVID ____________________________________________

8. AP ______________________________________________

9. Undergrad _______________________________________

10. General Ed ______________________________________

11. AA or AS _______________________________________

12. BA or BS _______________________________________

13. Major __________________________________________

14. Minor __________________________________________
BRAG SHEET

Estimated Lesson Time: 20 minutes

PURPOSE:
- To create a real-world document
- To classify and organize major ideas with supporting details

HOW-TO:
1. At some point or another, students will need a letter of recommendation from a teacher, pastor, rabbi, or mentor. In order to help the process along, many students find it helpful to create “Brag Sheets” where they note their major accomplishments.

2. Lead a discussion on accomplishments students in their grade level have achieved (i.e. first job, GPA, passing a difficult course, student government, participation in clubs, sports teams, etc.). Discuss how each achievement can speak to a particular quality or skill (i.e. Raising grades from all C’s to B’s shows determination, good work ethic, and focus. Joining the school tennis team shows the student keeps up grades and has good teamwork skills.)

3. Have students fill out the worksheet denoting their biggest achievements. (For students early or pre-high school, they may feel they have not accomplished much.)

4. At the bottom of the page, the student is asked to write a business letter requesting a letter of recommendation. Write a sample letter on the board.

5. Use this paper in conjunction with “Interview Practice” on pages 89-90.

VARIATIONS:

Film Connection: Have students create Brag Sheets for the first generation students featured in the film.

Brag About Others: Have students list qualities and skills they see in their peers in the classroom. Have students randomly select the name of another student in the classroom, then on a paper the student considers three strengths of the person they chose. Give the students three minutes to write their ideas then have the students group up. After students have shared their ideas, have the students reflect on the qualities shared by their peers in a journal entry.
Directions: Most college or scholarship applications will direct you to acquire letters of recommendation. You will need to talk to adults who have known you to write these letters. When asking an adult to write a letter, it is a good idea to give the adult a “Brag Sheet” detailing your personal strengths, accomplishments, and abilities. Fill in the following worksheet to develop your own personal Brag Sheet.

Name ___________________________________________ Class of _____________________________

Academic strengths
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________

Volunteer experience
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________

Sports/Extracurricular Activities experience _________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________

Work experience ________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________

Other things that set me apart _________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________

Now that you have filled out your brag sheet, create a one page letter requesting a letter of recommendation. The letter should be short and to the point. All letters should be typed in a formal business letter format.
PROFILE OF MY COLLEGE CHOICES

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 min

PURPOSE:

• To utilize research skills that show an understanding of a subject area
• To draw evidence from multiple sources
• To read informational texts
• To present research data
• To organize information in a logical format

HOW-TO:

1. Prior to giving the assignment, make sure students have read “Know Your Schools” on pages 101-104.

2. Review the differences between:

   a. Dream schools: colleges where your test scores and grades may be considered at or just below the average admitted student.
   b. Competitive schools: your grades and test scores fall above or well within the average.
   c. Safety schools: your grades and test scores are well above the average for students admitted.

3. Before passing out this worksheet, make sure your students will have access to either computers for research or several college guidebooks on hand.

4. Pass out the worksheet and tell students they have 20 minutes to select three schools to research: a dream school, a competitive school, and a safety school.

5. Once students have finalized their selections, they should complete the organizer for each school. If more time is needed, the worksheet may be assigned as homework.

VARIATIONS:

College Fair Field Trip: Organize a class field trip to a local college fair and have students select schools from those presenting at the college fair.
### PROFILE OF MY COLLEGE CHOICES

**Directions:** Review the requirements listed on your dream colleges’ websites for acceptance. Fill in the organizer below. In the column labeled “Dream School,” list your first choice for a University and their statistics. This should be a school where your test scores and grades may be considered at or just below the average admitted student. In the column labeled “Competitive School” list your second choice. This should be a college where your grades and test scores fall above or well within the average. In the column labeled “Safety School,” select a back-up plan. This should be a school where your grades and test scores are well above the average for students admitted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DREAM SCHOOL</th>
<th>COMPETITIVE SCHOOL</th>
<th>SAFETY SCHOOL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average GPA for Entrance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Average SAT / ACT Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Location (Close to a city? Region?)</td>
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<td>Annual Tuition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Size of Student Population</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Majors Offered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnic Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus Life</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROS AND CONS

Estimated Lesson Time: 30 minutes

PURPOSE:
- To pose persuasive arguments
- To use valid reasoning in arguments
- To evaluate claims
- To compare and contrast

HOW-TO:
1. Have a class discussion about community college—look at the supplemental reading “The Community College Advantage” (page 105) and “Choosing a 4-yr University” (page 106) on this topic for more information.
2. Have the class read “The Community College Advantage” (page 105) and “Choosing a 4-yr University” (page 106).
3. Have students team up to evaluate the pros and cons on the graphic organizer.
4. After students have listed their ideas, have the students individually write their ideas about community college.

VARIATIONS:
Guest Speaker: Many towns or cities have nearby community colleges that will send representatives to speak to your class.

The Money Factor: Have students make a cost projection comparison sheet where they compare the costs of going directly to a 4-year university versus going to a community college for the first two years. Visit the U.S. Department of Education’s “Calculator Center” (http://collegecost.ed.gov/netpricecenter.aspx) to input a college or university and find out how much it will actually cost to attend.
COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROS AND CONS

Directions: After learning about community colleges, create a Pro and Con list for attending these types of colleges. For each section, be sure to have at least three items for consideration.

PRO-COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
(For)

1. _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
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   _______________________________________________________

4. _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________ 

5. _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________

CON-COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
(Against)

1. _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________________
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4. _______________________________________________________
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5. _______________________________________________________
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COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROS AND CONS

Write a short reflection that demonstrates your personal belief about attending a Community College:

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________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
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WHO WILL SUCCEED?

Estimated Lesson Time: 20 minutes

PURPOSE:
- To write persuasively
- To marshal evidence
- To predict and interpret

HOW-TO:
1. Partway through the film (preferably just after viewing chapter 5) pass out the worksheet.
2. Have the students predict who they believe will succeed in getting to college.
3. Point out the importance of marshaling evidence to prove a prediction.
4. Students may appreciate time to share their arguments verbally.

VARIATIONS:

Extend: Have students analyze themselves and decide what characteristics they hold that make them likely to succeed and those characteristics that may hold them back from reaching their college dreams.

4-Corners: Post a picture or the name of one of the First Generation students in each corner. Tell the students they will need to decide who they believe will succeed in reaching his/her college dream. Don’t allow the students to discuss their ideas yet. Point out where each student is posted in the classroom, then, upon your word, the students will stand up and move to the corner of the student they believe will succeed. Once there, give the students one minute to confer with their group and to marshal evidence in support of their student. Call time and one-by-one ask a representative to state the case for their student. As students hear arguments in favor of a student, they can move if persuaded. If a student moves, you may want to ask them what convinced him/her to move. After this process it is a good idea for students to journal on the likely success of the students.
WHO WILL SUCCEED?

Who do you think will be successful in achieving the college dream? Select one student who you believe will be successful and provide at least three examples why you believe this student will do well.

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CREATING A THESIS STATEMENT

Estimated Lesson Time: 20 minutes

PURPOSE:

- To support claims
- To introduce and structure ideas using planning skills
- To write persuasively
- To create a thesis statement

HOW-TO:

1. Tell the students they will be creating an essay about First Generation. Since there is a lot of information, the students will need to determine what they will share in an essay and why it is significant. This is where a thesis statement comes in handy as it helps focus an essay and directs its purpose.

2. Pass out the worksheet and have students read aloud the sections on “What is a thesis?” and “What is supporting evidence?” As students read, make comments and suggestions for annotations as they work through the information.

3. Before moving on, you may wish to go over thesis statements using other (even more simplistic) topics such as why a type of cookie is the best, a book that is worth reading, or any other idea.

4. Now have a student read the task aloud. Ask students to restate and re-read portions of the task so it is clear and students understand expectations for the thesis.

5. Have students try writing a thesis on the lines provided. This process will take quite a bit of time as students will essentially be writing an entire essay in one sentence. Here are some samples:

   Cecilia is most likely to succeed in college because she is an athlete, an AVID student, and an AP student.

   Dontay is most likely to succeed in college because he has changed his life around, has worked hard to improve his grades, and has athletic abilities.

   Jess is most likely to succeed in college because she has a job, a supportive mother, and a reason to get out of the city.

   Soma is most likely to succeed in college because he is involved with his culture, is close to USC, and is charismatic.

6. Once students have written their theses, have them pair and share their ideas. Students should listen to hear three pieces of evidence cited. If less than three are cited (or in some cases more than three), students should be directed to change their theses accordingly.

7. Use this page as a starting point to construct a persuasive essay. The “task” can serve as the prompt for the essay. Use the rubric on page 123 and the Peer Editing worksheet on page 124.

VARIATIONS:

Homework: Consider assigning an additional thesis for homework. Some suggested topics include:

Identify the character traits that stopped one First Generation student from reaching his/her goals. Write a thesis statement that defines the character you have selected and gives at least three pieces of evidence.

What three characteristics or traits help students succeed in reaching their college goals?
CREATING A THESIS STATEMENT

What is a thesis? A thesis statement is the most important statement in an essay. The thesis statement is one sentence that defines the author’s perspective and gives the reader a sense of the essay’s direction (in other words, it is a road map for where the essay is going). A thesis is typically found at the end of an introductory paragraph. Here are two examples of thesis statements students wrote on the topic of public versus private universities:

Public universities offer students a better education than private campuses because public universities have a larger number of classes offered, have more students to interact with for campus activities, and have lower tuition costs.

Private universities offer students a better education than their public counterparts as private universities can instruct on religious beliefs, can provide smaller class sizes, and can offer better on-campus support systems for students.

Did you notice the two examples discuss the same topic from different perspectives? Since a thesis is an argument, you can argue either side of an issue so long as you have supporting evidence.

What is supporting evidence? Typically a thesis will have three pieces of evidence (big ideas) that become the “road map” of the essay. In the first example the author’s supporting evidence is:

Public schools have a larger number of classes offered.

Public schools have more students to interact with for campus activities.

Public schools have lower tuition costs.

Notice, the author provides three pieces of supporting evidence in the thesis statement and does not elaborate on the evidence. The thesis statement is the introduction to the evidence, the body paragraphs will elaborate. For instance, a reader will assume the first body paragraph will discuss the additional classes a Public University offers versus a Private University since it is the first piece of evidence provided in the thesis.

Task: Identify the character from First Generation who demonstrates the greatest potential to do well in college. Write a thesis statement that defines the character you have selected and gives at least three pieces of evidence.

Example- Hector is most likely to succeed in college because he is a hard worker at school, is a dependable employee, and is a good role model to his younger brother.

My thesis statement-

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Talk about it: Turn to a friend and discuss your argument and how you plan to back it up with evidence from the film. When it is your turn to listen, see if your friend has provided at least three pieces of evidence in the thesis statement. Practice active listening by giving feedback.
RESPONDING TO NAYSAYERS

Estimated Lesson Time: 20 minutes

PURPOSE:

• To pose persuasive arguments
• To use valid reasoning in arguments
• To evaluate claims

HOW-TO:

1. Define the term naysayer to your class. Webster’s Dictionary defines it as: one who denies, refuses, or is skeptical or cynical about something.

2. Discuss how all of the students in First Generation had naysayers around them.

3. Tell the students one way to stay focused and driven toward college is by preparing to respond to those who say college isn’t for you. Remind them it is important to be respectful yet direct when responding to someone who is in opposition to your goals. In particular, if a parent disagrees with your choice to go to college, there can be a lot of conflict. The best way to respond in many situations is by demonstrating focus and hard work on a daily basis paired with a simple response.

4. Now pass out the worksheet and help the students get started with one or two quick responses.

5. Once students have written ideas, have them share their ideas with the class. Below are samples responses students created. Student answers may vary:

“College is too expensive. While you spend your money going to college, I’ll be making money.”

“You’re right, college is expensive. That’s why I am applying for scholarships to pay for my education.”

“College may be expensive, but I am going to have lots of opportunities for higher paying jobs once I finish my degree.”

“College is expensive. But statistics show once I have my college degree, I’ll be making two or three times more than someone who doesn’t have a degree.”

“If you don’t know what you are going to do with your life, college is a waste of time.”

“College is a great place to explore different career opportunities and network with those who do.”

“I’m going to Community College to explore career paths. If I didn’t, I might be behind a desk doing something I don’t like for the rest of my life.”

“The first two years of college normally focus on completing General Ed. I have plenty of time to figure out my career goal.”

“Going to college isn’t for everyone. I never needed college.”

“It’s good that you were able to succeed without college, but nowadays applicants for many jobs need a minimum of a college education to have a chance.”

“Not all careers need college; however, mine does.”

“College will help me to become an engineer because it will certify me for the workforce.”

“How can you leave your family behind? Don’t you care about family?”

“I love my family and I am going to college to make a better life for my family.”

“I do care about my family. I am going to school so I can provide more for the people who love me.”

“I am not leaving my family behind; I am leading them to a better future.”

VARIATIONS:

Role Play: Put on skits using the above statements. Have students imagine what the scene looks like when someone says this statement to a future college student. Group the students and give one statement per group. Each group is responsible for putting together a short 2-5 minute skit where they present the naysayers statement and at least one strong, respectful response.
RESPONDING TO NAYSAYERS

Directions: As you prepare to journey toward college, there will be some who will doubt your journey. How will you respond to those who don’t think you need to go to college? Below you will find a list of actual comments that have been told to some students who hope to go to college. Come up with a persuasive response that is both positive and keeps the focus on the benefits of college.

“College is too expensive. While you spend your money going to college, I’ll be making money.”
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

“If you don’t know what you are going to do with your life, college is a waste of time.”
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

“Going to college isn’t for everyone. I never needed college.”
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

“How can you leave your family behind? Don’t you care about family?”
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
FIRST GENERATION STUDENT COMPARISON

Estimated Lesson Time: 20 minutes

PURPOSE:
- To compare and contrast
- To develop critical thinking skills
- To write using reasoning

HOW-TO:
1. This activity coincides with the worksheet labeled “First Generation Film Notes” on page 42.
2. After viewing the film, have students select the character with whom they most identify.
3. Have students pair up to discuss traits and abilities they share in common with the First Generation student of their choosing.
4. Students then write their ideas on the Venn Diagram citing similarities in the middle (connected portion) and differences in the outside (unconnected portion).

VARIATIONS:
Discussion: Rather than writing this down in the circles, have students make two lists of similarities and differences.
Writing: Have students write a reflection on the back of the worksheet discussing their similarities and differences in paragraph form.
FIRST GENERATION: STUDENT COMPARISON

Directions: Using your notes from the film, use the Venn Diagram to compare yourself to one of the characters in the film.

YOU

SIMILAR CHARACTERISTICS

FIRST GENERATION
STUDENT'S NAME:
FIRST GENERATION: IDENTIFYING THE THEME

Estimated Lesson Time: 20 minutes

PURPOSE:
- To understand and recognize a central theme
- To create a thesis statement
- To support claims
- To introduce and structure ideas using planning skills
- To write persuasively

HOW-TO:
1. After viewing the entire film, remind the students just as books have a theme, films have themes. Ask the students to discuss what theme the filmmakers may be trying to portray or teach. You may need to review the concept of a theme and how a theme is supported by situations and events in the work.

2. Now pass out the worksheet and have the students identify themes previously discussed.

3. For each theme identified, tell the students they will need to support the theme with evidence from the film. Give students time to come up with at least two themes with supporting evidence. Here is a sample:

   | Determination and focus pay off. |
   | Low-income students have a hard time getting to college |

   - Jess’ AP Classes
   - Don’tay’s GPA
   - Don’tay takes the bus & train
   - Soma’s mom doesn’t understand paying for college

   - Soma’s $18,000 of financial aid
   - Cecilia’s sports scholarship
   - Cecilia’s family can’t give her money

4. Have students pair up and share their ideas. If they gain new ideas, have them write the ideas where appropriate.

5. After brainstorming, have students select which theme they feel is most evident in the film.

6. Students will then create a thesis statement that could act as a controlling idea for an essay on the theme of the film.
VARIATIONS:

**Extension:** Now that students have worked through the process of marshaling evidence for a theme, have them write the actual paper. Use the Writing Rubric on page 123 to guide students’ writing.

**Teamwork:** Use the above information, but have students complete the worksheet in pairs or groups.

**Practice First:** Practice this same concept with “simplistic” stories such as fairy tales, fables, or movies students know from their childhood. By dealing with a “simplistic” story first, students tend to understand the process better and apply the skills learned to the harder topics embedded in *First Generation.*
FIRST GENERATION: IDENTIFYING THE THEME

Directions: You are asked to write an essay defining the filmmakers’ purpose for creating First Generation. In order to do so, you need to define the theme of the film. Just as books have a theme, films have themes. Use the web below to brainstorm what theme the filmmakers may be trying to portray. In each bubble write a possible theme and support the theme with evidence from the film.

FIRST GENERATION BIG IDEAS

Thesis: Next, evaluate which theme is best supported by the greatest pieces of evidence. Share which theme you believe is the strongest by creating a thesis statement. Define what the theme of the film is and provide a road-map for your essay by listing at least three supporting details in your thesis.

Example:

Alice in Wonderland’s central theme is absurdity is fun, but can lead to destruction as seen in the Cheshire Cat’s directions, the Mad Hatter’s Tea Party, and the Queen of Hearts’ croquette game.

(Note: The theme of the film is “absurdity can lead to destruction”. Notice how the author cites three examples he will later discuss in the body paragraphs.)

My Thesis Statement:

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
FIRST GENERATION STUDENT EVALUATION

Estimated Lesson Time: 20 minutes

PURPOSE:
• To develop prewriting skills
• To determine supporting evidence
• To analyze characters and their actions

HOW-TO:
1. After watching the entire film, pass out the worksheet.
2. Have students write areas of strength and areas for growth for each student. There should be three ideas in each column.
3. Have students meet in small groups and share data. If students get new ideas, they should write them down. Students should spend at least five minutes in discussion groups. Use the below example as a guide. (Note: Students’ answers may vary.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jessica</th>
<th>Soma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHAT DOES SHE DO WELL?</strong></td>
<td><strong>WHAT DOES HE DO WELL?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is enrolled in AP Classes.</td>
<td>He is involved with his Pacific Islander Community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is involved in her school through score/recordkeeping.</td>
<td>He is active in clubs and organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She works to pay for her own education.</td>
<td>He earns a lot of money in financial aid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dontay</td>
<td>Cecilia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHAT DOES HE DO WELL?</strong></td>
<td><strong>WHAT COULD HE HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He turned his grades around after sophomore year.</td>
<td>He could have been more aware of the Historically Black Colleges deadlines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is involved in sports.</td>
<td>He could have researched more on the college tuition costs for private universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He takes Physics even though it wasn’t a high school graduation requirement.</td>
<td>He could have taken his SATs earlier so he wouldn’t have to pick between the big game and testing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VARIATIONS:**

**Team Representatives:** Divide the class into four groups. Each group is responsible for one section of the organizer (i.e. Dontay is Group 1; Cecilia is Group 2, etc.). Once teams have their responses, they present them to the rest of the class and the class copies down their responses.

**Journal:** Have the students journal on possible solutions on areas for growth.
**FIRST GENERATION: STUDENT EVALUATION**

**Directions:** After watching the film, fill in this graphic organizer. Be sure you have at least three ideas in each section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jessica</th>
<th></th>
<th>Soma</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHAT DOES SHE DO WELL?</strong></td>
<td><strong>WHAT COULD SHE HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?</strong></td>
<td><strong>WHAT DOES HE DO WELL?</strong></td>
<td><strong>WHAT COULD HE HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Dontay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT DOES HE DO WELL?</th>
<th>WHAT COULD HE HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cecilia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT DOES SHE DO WELL?</th>
<th>WHAT COULD SHE HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SELF-EVALUATION

Estimated Lesson Time: 10 minutes

PURPOSE:

• To develop planning and analysis
• To apply information to real life experiences

HOW-TO:

1. After completing the worksheet titled “First Generation: Student Evaluation”, have the students reflect on their own experiences with this worksheet. (We suggest pairing this activity with “First Generation: Self-Evaluation Follow-Up” on page 70.)

2. Remind the students we all have strengths and abilities that can be utilized at and/or may be valuable to a college; these are the things that will help us get to or succeed in college. In addition, we must remember no one is perfect and we all have areas for growth; these are the areas that may hinder us from getting to or succeeding in college. Rather than list the negatives, have students list ways to change behaviors or add new behaviors to get ready for college.

3. Give the students this worksheet and provide them with at least 10 minutes to write.

4. Have students pair up and share their ideas.

5. Provide time to refine the list after discussion.

VARIATIONS:

After the form is complete, have the students reflect on their behaviors they hope to change and have them write a point-by-point plan of action to change their behaviors.
**SELF-EVALUATION**

**Directions:** Fill in this graphic organizer about yourself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All About Me</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHAT DO I DO WELL?</strong></td>
<td><strong>WHAT CAN I START DOING DIFFERENTLY TO PREPARE MYSELF FOR COLLEGE?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SELF-EVALUATION FOLLOW-UP

Estimated Lesson Time: 20 minutes

PURPOSE:

- To write using reasoning
- To produce clear, organized writing
- To apply information to real life experiences
- To develop critical thinking skills

HOW-TO:

1. After completing the worksheet titled "First Generation: Self-Evaluation", have the students make a plan as to how they will work on two of the areas for growth they have identified.

2. Remind the students we must remember no one is perfect and we all have areas for growth; these are the areas that may hinder us from getting to or succeeding in college. This is a chance for students to think practically and use critical thinking skills.

3. Give the students this worksheet and provide them with at least 10 minutes to write. As students write, walk around the room and assist with those who may be stuck.

4. Have students pair up and share their ideas.

5. Provide time to refine the list and ideas after discussion.

VARIATIONS:

Plan of Action: After the form is complete, have students type up a formal plan of action where they identify what success looks like (i.e. A 3.0 GPA, entrance into Honors classes, etc.). Have students make a contract for themselves and sign it. Attach the contract to a folder and have the students come back to the folder once a month. Ask the students to put evidence of their progress in the folder (i.e. progress reports, books read, etc.). Once goals are met, celebrate the achievements publicly.

Get Counseled: Have the students meet with the school counselor or mentor to fill out the form.
SELF-EVALUATION FOLLOW-UP

Directions: Now that you have identified areas for growth, make an action plan on how you will improve at least two of the areas identified. Consider people who may be of help—teachers, counselors, parents, pastors, rabbis, and big brothers or sisters—as well as resources that can support you (i.e. College & Career Center, the Internet, www.gocollegenow.org, etc.). See the sample below.

Area for Growth: Low test scores are bringing down my GPA.

THREE STEP PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT:
1. Start taking Cornell Notes when I read at home.
2. Meet with Mr. Fenderson after school once a week in a study group.
3. Make flashcards on important terms or vocabulary words.

I. Area for Growth: ____________________________________________________________

Three Step Plan for Improvement:
1. __________________________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________________________

II. Area for Growth: __________________________________________________________

Three Step Plan for Improvement:
1. __________________________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________________________
TIMED ESSAY PROMPT

“It’s time to ditch the college-for-all crusade… it’s doing more harm than good.”

-Robert Samuelson, columnist for the Washington Post

Do you agree with the above statement? Should most students plan to go to college? Why or why not? Plan and write an essay in response to Samuelson’s quote. Be sure to support your ideas with facts and evidence from the film, studies, readings, personal observations or experiences. Be sure to include a thesis statement in your essay.

Use the writing rubric as you plan your essay.

You have 25 minutes total.
TELL YOUR STORY

Estimated Lesson Time: 20 minutes to introduce/ 2 weeks to complete project outside of class

Purpose:

• To deliver a narrative
• To support creative expression

HOW-TO:

1. Tell the students they will have a chance to tell their own life stories.

2. Pass out the worksheet and read through the options for storytelling. It may help to have students use the “Personal Timeline” worksheet when considering what story is worth telling.

3. Once students have selected their story and method of storytelling, have them write their proposal on a piece of lined paper.

4. Review their proposals and make suggestions when appropriate.

5. Have students work on their presentation either in class or outside of class.

6. On the day of the presentation (some may need multiple days to present), have students take notes on the effective methods of storytelling.

VARIATIONS:

Other Stories: Have students share biographies and memoirs instead of their own stories.
TELL YOUR STORY

First Generation was created to document the struggles four students experienced in becoming first generation college students. The filmmakers use film to tell the story of the students, to express the students’ conflicts, and to educate viewers on the struggles of these students.

Just as First Generation tells a story, you can too. Everyone has a story to tell about his/her life. Maybe your story is about your struggle to wake up every morning to get to school on time—hopefully you get there. Perhaps your story is about the community service you do at a local convalescent home and a friendship you formed there. You may even have a story about your family eating dinner and the conversations that happen there. Whatever your story is, it is time to tell it.

Assignment: Create a presentation to tell your story. Your story doesn’t need to be heartwarming, nor does it need to be tragic—it can be funny or serious, but no matter the mood, it must be real. Decide what story you want to share with the class and then choose a creative outlet to tell your story. Choose one of the methods below. You will be graded using the rubric below.

1. Documentary Filmmaker- Create a documentary film depicting a day of your life. Films should be at least 5 minutes in length and should be edited to show a full story or conflict. In other words, don’t just film yourself brushing your teeth and hair for five minutes. A one-page summary of your film will be evaluated for your English Conventions grade.

2. Drama- Write a 5-minute skit about your life and perform it in front of the class. Be sure to have a copy of the script for all of the actors and bring in props and/or costumes. The script will be evaluated for your English Conventions grade.

3. Storybook- Create a children’s storybook. The book should be at least 10 pages and should contain full-color illustrations and text on every page.


5. Newspaper- Write a front-page newspaper that contains at least 4 articles about your life. Consider the different elements of a newspaper and include at least one photograph or cartoon strip that relates to your life.

6. Speech- Write a speech about your story and deliver the speech to the class. The speech should be at least three-pages typed.

7. Computer Presentation- Create a computer presentation that tells your story. If using a program such as PowerPoint, include at least 10 slides. If using an Internet-based program such as Prezi, include at least ten jumps.

8. Other- Come up with your own method. You must seek approval from your teacher before you begin working on your project.

Content ___/ 50
Quality and Effort ___/ 25
English Conventions ___/ 25
THE MILLION-DOLLAR SCHOLARSHIP:
PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS

Estimated Lesson Time: 75 minutes

PURPOSE:
• To present persuasive arguments
• To prepare a speech
• To marshal evidence using valid reasoning
• To form arguments

HOW-TO:
1. This process typically takes anywhere between one full class period to three periods. A majority of the “how-to” is listed on the worksheet page.

2. After viewing the entire film, divide the class into five groups that will face off to win one million dollars for one of the First Generation students. Four of the five teams will represent “First Generation Teams”, that is they will speak on behalf of one of the four students from the film; the fifth team represents “The Foundation” who will award the scholarship to one of the teams.

3. Pass out the worksheet and have students read all of the instructions aloud. It is important all students read all of the information, even if they are not on that “type” of team. Reading the instructions will help the students better understand the process.

4. During this read through, discuss the criteria for grading. Define what good posture, voice, content/questions, etc. look like. Modeling both positive and negative examples of this will greatly help your students understand what strong communication skills look like.

5. Now that students have read the process, assign each team a part (i.e. Team Dontay, Team Cecilia, The Foundation, etc.).

6. Announce that teams will have 20-30 minutes to meet and discuss the task before them. During this preparatory time, the First Generation Teams should create a list of talking points that cite major accomplishments of their character (i.e. Dontay pulled himself out of a life of crime and made the Honor Roll at his school or Jess enrolled in AP classes and was one of the top in her class.). First Generation Teams should essentially create a short speech that persuades The Foundation that their character is most worthy of the scholarship.

7. Concurrently, The Foundation will prepare a list of questions to ask the teams as well as decide what criteria they will look for when selecting a winner.

(Typically at this point the class session will end. Based on your classroom, you may wish to have the next session act as a rehearsal day where students remain in their groups and practice or you may notify students the contest will take place during the next session.)

8. Before you start the contest, have the students review the rubrics at the bottom of the page. Remind them they will be evaluated using these rubrics. You will want to review these too as they are the basis for your grading.

9. One-by-one, call up each team to present their case before The Foundation. After the case is presented, have The Foundation ask their follow-up questions. The other teams will get to listen, but the first team has the opportunity to set the bar and state “new” ideas; the other teams will have to come up with ways of possibly saying the same ideas without sounding as if they “stole” them.

(Note: This is a natural place to break for the end of a class session. Simply continue from this point during the next session. If time demands a break, take it and review what was shared during the previous session.)

10. After all teams have been called, The Foundation will debate with each other as to who won. The other teams must remain silent and cannot give further input.
11. Now conduct a secret vote within The Foundation. Have each member of The Foundation secretly write the name down of the team they believe deserves the money. Have a leader from The Foundation, or you as the teacher, read the votes aloud.

12. Once the vote is read, congratulate all of the teams.

13. Now on a piece of blank paper have students evaluate their teammates on a 1-15 scale (1 being the worst teammate, 7 being mediocre and 15 being an exceptional teammate). Keep these evaluations anonymous. Use this data to average out a “teamwork” score for each student. Therefore, a student who did little to contribute but happened to be on the winning team may only earn a B while the rest of the team earns an A.

14. After the contest, have students respond to the journal titled “Response to the Million Dollar Scholarship” on page 77. If there is time, do this response during class. If not, assign it as homework.

VARIATIONS:

**Signs:** To bring out the artists in you classroom, have the teams create a team poster depicting words and images that will help “sell” their student as the most deserving of the scholarship.

**The Foundation Variation:** Instead of having a team for The Foundation, outsiders can fill this role. You may wish to assemble a group of teachers, principals, or librarians to act as The Foundation. If The Foundation members haven’t seen the film, it is better as they will be unbiased and only work off of what is said during the contest.

**Writing:** Prep this activity by assigning the writing assignment “Creating a Thesis Statement” (pages 54-55). Based on the students’ selections, place them in groups as to their personal convictions as to who is the “best” student.

Discuss what went well and what could have been improved upon during the game. Have the class discuss rather than you just “telling” them all the points. Have the class focus on specific qualities they saw that were good persuasive techniques used by the other teams.
THE MILLION-DOLLAR SCHOLARSHIP:
PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS

Directions: For this assignment the class will be divided into five groups that will face off to win one million dollars for one of the First Generation students.

Four of the groups will be “First Generation Teams”: Team Cecilia, Team Dontay, Team Jessica, and Team Soma. The fifth group will be an imaginary scholarship board called “The Foundation”. The four First Generation Teams will each represent their respective student from the film in a class debate. The Group representing The Foundation will act as a corporation that will award one million dollars to the most persuasive team.

First Generation Teams: Your task is to create an argument that clearly shows your First Generation Student deserves The Million Dollar Scholarship. You will need to provide evidence from the film that highlights your First Generation Student’s achievements, obstacles he/she has overcome, and worthiness of the scholarship. You will present your case in front of the class, and The Foundation will determine which team has created the most persuasive argument. After all the teams have presented their arguments, The Foundation may ask a series of follow up questions.

The Foundation: Your task is to determine who is worthy of the one million dollars. You want to make sure your money goes to a student who has shown determination in his/her high school experience. Gender and race are not an issue for you. While you wait to hear the arguments from the teams, your task is to create a list of specific questions for each team. During the presentations by the First Generation Student Teams, take notes. After all of the teams have presented their arguments, your group will ask the questions you created. After all the questions have been answered, it is your turn to do the talking. Your group will debate together to come to a consensus over which team presented the best argument. After debating, take a vote amongst your group. The team with the most votes wins the million dollars.

All: After the winner is announced, all groups (including The Foundation) will evaluate their own teammates. You will give your teammates a score between 1-15 points, 15 being a superior teammate and 1 being a student who did not participate. Only evaluate students who are in your group.

Students on First Generation Teams will be graded using the following criteria:

- Voice ______/ 10
- Posture ______/ 10
- Content ______/ 30
- Journal ______/ 20
- Response to Questions ______/ 15
- Teamwork ______/ 15

______/ 100

Students on The Foundation will be graded using the following criteria:

- Voice ______/ 10
- Posture ______/ 10
- Questions ______/ 20
- Journal ______/ 20
- Discussion of Teams ______/ 25
- Teamwork ______/ 15

______/ 100
RESPONSE TO THE MILLION-DOLLAR SCHOLARSHIP

Directions: Discuss the experience you had in The Million-Dollar Scholarship Game. Was the outcome of the Million Dollar Scholarship fair? Why or why not? What do you think would have changed the outcome? How did this experience help you prepare for future experiences?
WHO ARE YOU?

(PERSONAL STATEMENT EXERCISE PART 1 OF 3)

*Estimated Lesson Time: 40 minutes*

**PURPOSE:**

- To develop planning, editing and writing skills
- To write a narrative with supporting details
- To introduce students to writing a personal statement
- To classify and identify significant details

**HOW-TO:**

1. This activity is Part 1 of a three-part exercise on writing a personal statement (Part 2 is “Personal Statement Outline” on page 81 and Part 3 is “Writing A Personal Statement” on page 82).

2. Model for the class what a personal timeline looks like on the board. Share your own personal experiences highlighting positive and negative experiences (use the sample on the worksheet as a guide).

3. Pass out the worksheet.

4. Give students at least 10 minutes to fill out the form.

5. Have students pair up and share their information, provide at least three minutes to share.

6. Ask the students to identify the major experiences in their lives by circling the top three.

7. Have the students pair up and define why those experiences were more significant that the others—no writing yet, just discussion.

8. Now have the students decide which one event taught them something significant. Have the students place a star next to the most significant life lesson.

9. On the back of the paper have the student list what made the event significant. Encourage students to bullet-point the main ideas as opposed to getting bogged down with paragraphs and sentences.

10. Next have the students pair up with a different student and have the students share about the experience and what they wrote on the back. If students add new details as they talk, have them write the ideas down.

11. On the back of the worksheet, have the students make a timeline of the significant event (i.e. If the student says graduating from 8th grade was the most significant, have them list the events that led up to graduation as well as the events that took place during graduation).
**WHO ARE YOU?**

**Directions:** Everyone has a story. Some of us have had difficult lives, others have had wonderful experiences, and most have it somewhere in the middle. Use this paper to tell your story in the form of a timeline. Consider 10 significant experiences that have defined your life. If you consider the event positive, put an arrow facing up. If it is negative, put an arrow facing down. If it is neutral, put an arrow pointing in both directions.

Note: Only include significant events. While finding a twenty-dollar bill on the ground is exciting, it probably isn’t significant unless it saved you or your family from tragedy. Think about achievements, losses, lessons learned, and other major events in your life.

*Example:*

- Sister born
- Dog ran away
- Won Softball Championship
- Grandma died
- Moved from California
- Moved to Texas
- My Timeline:
PERSONAL STATEMENT OUTLINE

(PERSONAL STATEMENT EXERCISE PART 2 OF 3)

Estimated Lesson Time: 30 minutes

PURPOSE:
- To produce clear and coherent writing
- To write a narrative
- To support ideas with specific pieces of evidence
- To develop planning, revising, editing, and writing skills

HOW-TO:
1. This activity is a follow-up to “Who Are You?” on pages 78-79.
2. Tell students many colleges require applicants to write a personal statement defining what sets them apart from the rest of the crowd. Each college may have a different essay; however, in essence most colleges want to know something personal and unique, as well as gain a writing sample.
3. Now, have the students read “Writing A Great College Essay” on page 110.
4. Read the prompt to the students: “Write a 2-page, typed essay (approximately 500 words) that defines a major life experience that has shaped you into the person you are today. Be sure to show how this event has changed you. Remember your audience is an educated college admissions reader. Use the rubric provided to guide your writing.”
5. Take time to brainstorm with the students. To get students thinking use “Who Are You? Timeline” activity on pages 78-79.
6. After students have brainstormed, pass out the worksheet.
7. Have the students read the directions and re-read the prompt.
8. Give the worksheet as a guideline, but underscore the importance of being unique, yet honest in this essay. Many college advisors suggest students need not feel locked into a standard format, however, for the purposes of this assignment, students are encouraged to follow the format shared on the worksheet.
9. Have students fill out the organizer then pair up to talk about their selected ideas.
PERSONAL STATEMENT OUTLINE

Directions: Using your personal timeline, start outlining your personal statement. Use the graphic organizer below to organize your thoughts. In some cases, this outline will not apply to your personal journey; however, be sure to use proper language conventions. Be sure to read and re-read the prompt so you are certain to customize your personal statement to the assignment.

Prompt: Write a 2-page, typed essay (approximately 500 words) that defines a major life experience that has shaped you into the person you are today. Be sure to show how this event has changed you. Remember your audience is an educated college admissions reader. Use the rubric provided to guide your writing.

| Introduction |
|--------------|------------------|----------------------|
| HOOK | TRANSITION | THESIS |

| Body Paragraphs |
|------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| EVIDENCE #1 | EVIDENCE #2 | EVIDENCE #3 |

| Conclusion |
|-------------|------------------|--------------------|
| SUMMARIZE | TRANSITION | CONCLUDING THOUGHT |
WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

(PERSONAL STATEMENT EXERCISE PART 3 OF 3)

Estimated Lesson Time: 90 minutes

PURPOSE:

- To produce clear and coherent writing
- To write a narrative
- To support ideas with specific pieces of evidence
- To develop planning, revising, editing, and writing skills

HOW-TO:

1. This is the final activity in the 3-part Personal Statement exercise.

2. Present this prompt to the class:

   **Prompt:** Write about a significant event that has shaped you over the years. Describe the event and share what you learned or how you were shaped by the event. Why is this event more significant than any other event? Be sure to provide enough detail about the event and your growth/experience.

   Tell the class they will use the worksheets “Who Are You?” and “Personal Statement Outline” to guide their writing process. Explain that in many cases students should write their personal statements in chronological order.

3. Have students look at the rubric from page 123 before they write a draft and discuss expectations.

4. Now have students create a typed draft of their work.

5. After typing a draft, have students read their work aloud to one other student (or if possible to you, the teacher). During this process, have the student make corrections on his/her work as he/she notes them. Have the peer/teacher listening just give feedback on the content (unless there are glaring issues with syntax or diction).

6. Have the students revise their work based on self or peer feedback.

7. Have the students meet again, either in new or the same groups. Now the students will exchange papers and will give each other grammar, punctuation, and spelling feedback. Use the “Peer Editing Page” on page 124.

8. Finally, have students create a final draft at home or in class. Use the Writing Rubric on page 123 to evaluate the work.

9. After completing the final draft, you may have students read their essays aloud in front of the class.

VARIATIONS:

**Speech:** Rather than just submitting the final essay, have students stand and share their work as a speech. Many of these stories may be very personal and tear-filled; however, students will share if you provide a supportive, nurturing environment. Typically students take 5 minutes per essay to read.

**Research:** On most college websites users are able to download or view the college’s application and essay topic. Rather than assigning the same essay, have students self-select an essay, preferably from colleges they are interested in.
GUEST SPEAKERS

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

PURPOSE:
• To listen with critical thinking
• To plan and write questions for research with intent to gather relevant details
• To introduce students to mentors

HOW-TO:
1. Organize special guest speakers to speak in the classroom. Find students who are currently enrolled in college or have graduated high school to come and speak about their experience. A good place to start looking is asking students if they have older siblings. In a pinch, call upon other teachers. Feel free to use the sample letter provided on page 84 to invite guests.

2. Once you have an individual or a panel of college students/graduates organized, give the worksheet to your students so they can brainstorm questions. It typically helps speakers if you give the questions to them ahead of time.

3. Bring in the speaker and enjoy.

4. After the speaker leaves, have the students write a reflection on the experience as well as three ideas that were gained or confirmed from the visitor.

VARIATIONS:
Web-Chat: Set up a web-chat with a university and stream the discussion in your classroom.

Letter Writing: Turn this assignment into a letter writing assignment. Mail out the letters and see what responses you get.
Dear ________________________________

My class is studying the film First Generation along with a curriculum that helps students understand and prepare for college. The film follows four high school students who hope to be the first people in their families to become college students.

On __________________________ I would like to invite you to visit my classroom as a special guest speaker. You are highly qualified for the task since you navigated the college process successfully. Even if you had help from a parent, teacher, or friend, you can discuss your personal journey to college acceptance and the college experience. The students will benefit greatly from hearing a first-hand account of how someone in their community was able to go to college. It is important that I hear back from you soon so I can make plans in my schedule. Please feel free to contact me; I have provided my contact information below.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope we can work together soon.

Sincerely,

_______________________________________________

School ________________________________ Room # __________
Address ________________________________

_______________________________________________

Phone Number ______________________________
e-mail ______________________________
GUEST SPEAKER BRAINSTORM

Directions: We will host a guest speaker on his/her journey to college. Consider questions you have that have not yet been answered. Make a list of at least five questions you want to ask our special guest speaker. Keep this paper and then be prepared to write the answers the guest gives to your questions.

1. ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

4. ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

5. ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
COUNSELOR SCAVENGER HUNT

*Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes – Or could be assigned as a homework assignment*

**PURPOSE:**

- To introduce students to their counselors
- To help students understand college and graduation requirements
- To practice interview techniques

**HOW-TO:**

*Note: In some schools it is unrealistic for a counselor to meet with all of the kids in your class during this study. Please see variations if this problem exists.*

1. Pass out the worksheet.

2. Have students fill out SECTION 1 of the worksheet in class. You will need to give them the information. (We suggest taking time to walk the entire class down to the location of the counselor on the first day of this assignment.)

3. The deadline for SECTION 2 will depend upon your school-size and counseling department. In some cases, it is realistic to expect students to have this section completed in three days, whereas in other schools two weeks may be necessary. Either way, point out to students that they will need to write a reflection on the back of the worksheet.

**VARIATIONS:**

**Guest Speaker:** Rather than each of the students visiting the counselor, have the counselor come to you. In many cases counselors can bring the students’ files to class and the kids can work through the worksheet with the counselor in class.

**Post the Answers:** Counselors may want your students to visit the office, but may be unable to meet with each student. Have the counselor post the answers to the worksheet in the office. On the paper it will detail where the students can gain the information needed for GPA or signing up for a future conference. In some cases, schools may have an online portal for students/parents. Set up a sign-in at the office for students to document their attendance.

**Share the Results:** After completing the worksheet, send them to the counselor. This data may be helpful for some to change or continue practices.
COUNSELOR SCAVENGER HUNT

Directions: In order to get to college, you will need to know where you stand with graduation requirements. Fill in all the required information in Section 1, then set up an appointment to meet with your school’s guidance counselor. In Section 2, interview your school’s guidance counselor to see where you are, and to get some helpful information.

SECTION 1-
Counselor’s Name ________________________________________  e-mail _____________________________________________
Office Hours_____________________________________________  Where is the counselor located on campus? ______________
Phone Number ___________________________________________  ___________________________________________________

SECTION 2-
1. What college did the counselor attend?

2. What is your current GPA?

3. What is your cumulative GPA? Ask your counselor to explain the difference between these two GPAs.

4. Your career goal is ________________________________ . What electives does your counselor suggest you should take to prepare for your career?

5. When can you meet with your counselor again to ensure you are on track for graduation and career goals? Set a date and time now and list it below.

6 What is your counselor’s favorite candy bar? (This may come in handy when you need to skip to the front of the line your senior year).

Signature of counselor: ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

Personal Response: After meeting with your counselor, do you feel differently about talking to him/her? Write your response on the back of this paper in at least 3-5 sentences.
INTERVIEW PRACTICE

Estimated Lesson Time: 30 minutes

PURPOSE:
- To develop strong speaking skills
- To plan and organize

HOW-TO:
1. Discuss what it means to put one’s best foot forward. Talk to the students about an experience you had with job interviews. You may wish to talk about details such as the importance of a handshake, business clothing, formal language and tone, and body language.

2. Tell the students they will practice being interviewed.

3. Pass out the worksheet or post the questions on the board.

4. Discuss the questions and have students try to analyze what the interviewer is trying to learn from the question—you may wish to have students discuss this in a small group or with the whole class.

5. Now tell the students it is time to interview. Rather than asking every question to each student, pose a question and randomly call on a student to answer. Ask the same question to multiple students so all students are called on at least once.

6. After the interview is over, have students reflect on their learning on the back of the paper.

VARIATIONS:

One-on-One Interviews: Have community members come into your classroom and interview the students for you. Sometimes being interviewed by someone “unfamiliar” puts students in a real-world situation.

Dressing Up: Give the students a chance to dress up for interviews. This will help reinforce the idea of making a strong, positive first impression. Go over the interview process on day one and conduct the actual interviews with the students dressed in “business” clothing on day two.
INTERVIEW PRACTICE

Directions: In some college admissions or scholarship processes, you will be asked to sit down for a formal interview. Many times you can get a list of typical questions from the school’s or scholarship foundation’s webpage. Today you will be a part of a class interview. Be prepared to answer all of these questions. Feel free to take down notes and use them for the interview process.

1. What are some of your personal accomplishments?

2. What qualities will you bring to a college campus?

3. Describe yourself in three words.

4. Tell us about a time when you had to overcome an obstacle.

5. What plans do you have for after college?

6. Who is your hero and why?
7. No one is perfect. Tell us about a weakness you have and how you expect to overcome it.

8. What are the attributes of a good college roommate?

9. Tell us about an extracurricular activity you are involved in.

10. Why should we choose you for our school/scholarship over the millions of other applicants?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW...

Directions: Write a reflection below. What went well? What didn’t? Describe what you learned and how you will apply the skills you learned today for real-life interviews.
BACKWARD MAPPING MY GOALS

PURPOSE:
- To gather relevant information
- To apply information to real life experiences
- To develop critical and higher thinking skills

HOW-TO:
1. Discuss high school’s graduation requirements. It will help the students greatly if you have a poster or handout on these requirements. Talk about the opportunity students have to customize their electives and some academic courses based on abilities and desires (i.e. most schools allow students to choose a Visual Art requirement from options such as Art, Drama, Photography, etc. depending on the interests of the student).

2. Pass out the worksheet to the students and tell them they will create an academic plan for their high school careers as well as their freshman year of college. Here, students will need to speculate as to what career they hope to enter into.

3. Have students research a college of their choosing and the courses they will be required to enroll in during their freshman term. Or provide students with a print-out of the requirements from a community college, a local university, an out of state university, a private four-year university, and a public four-year university. One of the schools could even be your alma mater which is a great opportunity to discuss your personal college journey.

4. By working from the “goal” backwards, and using the high school requirements list, students will be able to create a complete map of their high school careers.

VARIATIONS:

Cookie-Cutter: If students can take “tracks” for high school graduation, provide the students with the track that will lead to graduation and have them fill in the information from this form. When doing this, however, be sure to underscore the importance of students giving themselves opportunities and not limiting their choices based on less work. Remind students that less work now, often leads to fewer opportunities later in life.
**BACKWARD MAPPING MY GOALS**

**Directions:** In order to get into the college of your dreams, there are certain requirements you must fulfill. Some students are shocked to discover in order to be considered by some 4-year universities they must enroll in Calculus during high school. In order to enroll in Calculus, however, they needed to have started Algebra 2 their freshman year of high school!

In the organizer below, jump forward in time to when you will be a college freshman. Research what is required for you to enter your dream school. Then work backward to find out what classes you will have to take in order to reach your goal. A good place to find this information may be in your school’s College & Career Center or online.

Career Goal

Education Goal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements:</th>
<th>Additional Information:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Freshman</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HS Senior</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HS Junior</td>
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<td>HS Sophomore</td>
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<td>HS Freshman</td>
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</table>
COLLEGE FAIR

Estimated Lesson Time: roughly 270 minutes/6 class periods

PURPOSE:

• To utilize research skills that show an understanding of a subject area
• To draw evidence from multiple sources
• To read informational texts
• To present research data
• To organize information in a logical format
• To write an informative text
• To educate the community on college options

HOW-TO:

1. Prior to giving the assignment, select a date for the college fair where community members, students, and faculty can attend to learn about college options. Find a location big enough to allow for traffic such as a cafeteria, gymnasium or a large classroom.

2. Tell the students over the course of one to two weeks (either in class or as homework) they will create “science-fair” styled display boards and speeches that share about different colleges.

3. Pass out the worksheet to the class and read over the 5 steps.

4. Have the students sign up for colleges. You may allow students to work in teams of two or three; however, the more colleges you display the better.

5. Once students have their college selections, have them make a checklist of the criteria they will need to research. You may wish to add to the list of requirements.

6. Guide the students through researching and finding college web-pages. It is very helpful to contact counselors, College and Career Centers at high schools, or even colleges that may have access to additional resources that will help your students. If you contact College Admission Offices they may be willing to ship you materials on admissions and financial aid that your students may be able to distribute at the fair.

7. Have students create the display boards. This typically takes an entire class period.

8. Have students write a draft of their speech. Instruct the students to use the display board as a guide for their speeches as they will be their visual aid during the speeches.

9. Now have the students read their speeches to a partner. While reading, the friend should look at the display board to see if the speech matches the display. If there are any contradictory statements or even statements that need to be added to the speech, the friend should instruct the partner to these issues.

10. Revise speeches and create a final draft.

11. On the day of the fair, students should have their display boards, and printed speeches, and should be dressed appropriately for the fair.

12. During the class session move around the room and evaluate the displays.

VARIATIONS:

Surprise Evaluators: Have community members and other teachers evaluate the displays and speeches. To keep the students on their toes and to ensure all speeches are evaluated, assign visitors to evaluate the students.
COLLEGE FAIR

Our class will create a college fair where we feature colleges both local and far. Each student will create a college fair display board for a college of his/her choosing and will be responsible for giving a short 3-5 minute speech on the college on the day of the fair.

Step 1: Select a college.

Select a college that interests you. Don’t limit yourself to colleges that are in your backyard; think big, even think global! There shouldn’t be any repeated colleges in the class—each one should be unique.

Step 2: Acquire information on the college. (Two days will be given to this step)

Research your college both online and in books. Visit a College and Career Center and see if you can get any brochures or handouts the college produces. In many cases, you can get information sent directly to your home either by mail or e-mail. Be sure to find information on the following details: location, size of school, type of school, a list of majors offered, tuition costs, student entrance requirements, student-faculty ratios, typical class size, housing, activities such as clubs, athletics or organizations.

Step 3: Create a display board.

Create a display board that includes all of the information above. In addition decorate the poster with at least five photographs of the college and a picture of the school mascot.

Step 4: Write a short speech.

Write a one-page speech that you will recite on the day of the fair. The speech should cover information presented on the display board as well as give your own personal feelings and opinions on the school.

Step 5: Attend the fair.

On the day of the fair, you will be required to set up your board and stand by your board. As visitors come to your board, you will be required to recite your speech and show off your research. Note that any one of the visitors may be evaluating you and your display.

Rubric for Grading:

Research _______/30
Speech ______/20
Display Board _______/30
Conventions _______/20

_____/100
FIRST GENERATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Estimated Lesson Time: 20 minutes

PURPOSE:
- To pose questions with the purpose of gathering specific information

HOW-TO:
1. After watching the film, have students pose questions they would potentially ask one or multiple students from the film. Encourage the questions to be open-ended (with more than one possible answer; cannot be answered yes or no).

   Possible student questions include:
   - What was the best part of high school?
   - If you were to go back and change one thing about high school, what would you change?
   - When thinking about high school, what was the hardest part?
   - Where are you now in college?
   - What surprised you about attending college?
   - What helped you get into college?
   - How much debt do you have?
   - Are you glad you went to college? Why or why not?
   - What do your parent(s) think about your college education?
   - Have any of your other family members decided to go to college?

2. After students have written their questions, have students trade lists with a partner.

3. Partners will select at least three questions to answer in the voice of one of the characters.

4. After responding, students trade papers back. The original student evaluates if the other student answered as the First Generation Student would have. The original student then writes a reflection on his/her opinions as to what the First Generation Student would have said to two other questions.

VARIATIONS:

Extend: Have students find someone who was a first generation college student and interview the individual using the list of questions or create a new list customized for the interviewee.

Creative Journal Write: Have students choose one First Generation Student and write from his/her perspective about the journey to college. Try to have the students think like the First Generation Student and write using specific evidence from the film.
FIRST GENERATION: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Directions: After watching First Generation, write ten interview questions you would like to ask one of the students in the film. The questions can ask about the First Generation Student’s personal life, college aspirations, or current status. Use this paper and the back if necessary.

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“PUTTING YOURSELF TO THE TEST”

Adapted from “Seventeen’s Guide to Getting Into College”

Ah, standardized testing. Most of us groan at the concept. Even though it’s generally acknowledged that standardized tests are not necessarily the best or most comprehensive way of evaluating a student’s talent or potential, it is a requirement in place at the majority of universities. Luckily, even for people who have a lot of trouble with these tests, there are a lot of resources out there that can help everyone improve their scores.

TYPES OF TESTS

There are two main types of standardized testing accepted by colleges and universities: the ACT and the SAT. The PLAN and PSAT/NMSQT are the respective practice tests for the real deal.

The ACT is a college admissions exam which consists of four multiple-choice tests (five, if you take the optional writing test) covering the subjects of English, math, reading, and science. (www.actstudent.org)

The SAT is a college admissions exam comprised of three main sections: critical reading, mathematics, and writing. The critical reading section has multiple-choice questions including sentence completions and reading comprehension. The mathematics section includes questions on arithmetic operations, algebra, geometry, statistics, and probability. The writing section includes an essay prompt and multiple-choice questions dealing with improving sentences and paragraphs. (www.collegeboard.org)

There are also SAT Subject Tests, which are much more focused in specific subject areas than the traditional SAT or ACT. 20 different tests are offered throughout the year in areas such as literature, history, math, science, and languages. Some schools require that applicants submit a few SAT Subject test scores in addition to the SAT or ACT, so check with the admissions office at each school to find out what, if any, additional tests are required.

If you are in an advanced placement (AP) or international baccalaureate (IB) program, you’ll have the opportunity to take additional tests in whatever AP or IB classes you elect to take in high school. Unlike the SAT or ACT, the AP and IB tests are designed to assess knowledge acquired during a specific course. And while most colleges don’t require that you take these tests or even report your scores, if you do well (AP score of 3 or above; IB score of 4 or above) submitting these test scores will not only speak to your academic ability but it may earn you advanced standing or college credit.

SELECTING TESTS

Fall of sophomore year is when the PLAN test is typically administered, and fall of junior year is when you’ll need to take the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National merit Scholarship Qualifying Test). Once you receive the results, you’ll have an idea of your testing strengths and weaknesses, and you’ll also see how you stack up against other college-bound students. If you take both tests, you’ll be able to determine whether you’re better suited to either testing format. Plus, your PSAT/NMSQT score from junior year can put you in the running for National Merit Scholarships.

Take the SAT or ACT in the spring of junior year. This gives you enough time to take another one in early summer or fall of senior year if you feel the need to improve your scores. If you find yourself frustrated with your SAT scores, you may want to try taking the ACT—or vice versa. Most schools requiring standardized tests will accept either one; just be sure to double-check with the admissions offices.

Check with the schools to which you are applying to see if they require the SAT Subject Tests. You’ll want to take these when their material is fresh in your mind. Base your test selection on the classes you’ll be taking in the spring of junior year and fall of senior year, and take tests in the subjects you feel most confident.

Don’t forgo taking the SAT and ACT at least once. Yeah, it may not exactly be your idea of fun to spend four hours slogging through vocab and algebra, but you may surprise yourself and score pretty well, which could help you qualify for scholarships later.
GENERAL TESTING STRATEGIES

It’s a good idea to start preparing for the SAT and ACT several months before the test date. Check with your school counselor to see what test prep classes are offered locally at your high school, community library, or through non-profit organizations like The Boys & Girls Club. There are also some great free resources online (CollegeBoard.org and www.number2.com), and it’s always a good idea to invest in a test prep booklet to learn about testing strategies as well as trying your hand at practice questions. Remember, although you’ve likely encountered the subject matter of the SAT and ACT in school, they’re unlike any test that you’ve taken before so it’s important to go into them with some preparation, whether that means taking practice tests online, reading through a test prep book, or attending a class. Studies show that students improve their scores with greater preparation, and even just being aware of the layout and structure of the test will help you score higher and be more comfortable come test day. Here are some general testing strategies to keep in mind as you prepare.

- Understand the test directions for each section before test day so that you can use those extra minutes for answering questions.
- If you don’t know the answer but can rule out one or two of the choices, try making an educated guess.
- Skip questions that are taking up too much time or you can’t answer... incorrect answers will affect your score more than blanks. Just be sure to mark the questions you didn’t answer, and if you have more time at the end of the test, go back to them.
- Answer sentence completions first since they take less time than the reading comprehension.
- If a word has you stumped, think about how the root, prefix, or suffix is similar to other words, and make an educated guess about its meaning.
- Double-check your answer sheet to make sure your answers correctly correspond to the questions.
- Your essay should include one or two well-developed thoughts that support your point of view with vivid language.

WHEN YOUR SCORES DON’T ADD UP

Test scores are only one of many factors a college considers when selecting students, and some schools don’t even require standardized testing. So don’t be disheartened if your scores are lower than you expected. Emphasize the strengths in your applications and be assured that there are great colleges out there looking for students with your exact qualifications. Take a look at the average test scores of admitted students at the schools to which you are applying. If yours are way off the mark, you may need to adjust your expectations a bit and apply to more schools where you fall within the median range or where testing is not required.

There are a growing number of schools that either don’t require standardized testing or offer appealing alternatives to it, such as additional writing samples or a minimum GPA requirement. For a comprehensive listing of schools that offer alternatives to testing, visit www.fairtest.org.
As a high school student, I worked every weekend, did stats for softball and football, participated in several clubs, and was a member of the student council. I was very busy a lot of the time, and when it came to filling out college applications and applying for scholarships I was a bit lost. I was able to get some help with the FAFSA and a local scholarship organization, but other than that I felt I was on my own. I didn’t apply for big schools because I was afraid I wouldn’t be able to pay for them. My mother and father divorced when I was a freshman in high school and I lived with my mom who was a waitress at my Grandma’s restaurant at the time. We didn’t live luxuriously but we did fine. It scared me to even think about applying for out of state schools or four-year universities even though deep down I wanted to, all because all I saw was the giant tuition bill before my eyes.

I worked hard throughout high school and got good grades, so I know I could have been accepted to a four-year university. But at the time I did not realize all of the financial aid that was available for students like me. I didn’t know what questions to ask, and I failed to research all the opportunities that were out there and ask for help when I needed it. I tried to figure out everything on my own and do what I thought was best for me and my family.

I ended up choosing to go to a local community college in state that was about an hour from my hometown, so that I could live at home and commute in order to save some money. I received some financial aid and scholarships for school, but had I known more about the process during high school I know that I could have also received enough financial to attend a four-year university as well.

The best advice I have is to apply for every scholarship opportunity you have and seek out your advisors for help. Most students don’t realize that your teachers and counselors and advisors are there to help you with the process of getting into college, but they might not know what kind of help you need unless you talk to them about your specific situation and concerns. Don’t be afraid to ask questions about money for school. Your parents may not know the answers, but someone around you does.

I am now happy with my choice to attend community college because I completed the Registered Nursing program and have achieved my goal of becoming a registered nurse. Remember, you can become something! Continuing your education is key to a successful life, so keep up the good work in school and move forward toward your goals!

— Jess
"KNOW YOUR SCHOOLS"

Adapted from Seventeen's Guide to Getting Into College

Applying to college is so exciting because the options are limitless and anything is possible. But it can also be a little overwhelming if you don’t know what you’re looking for or what you want to get out of the experience. The most important thing to remember is that this decision is all about you: your education, your future, and your time to explore who you are and what you can offer this world. “One-size-fits-all” definitely doesn’t apply to the college search. There’s no perfect school out there, but you can find the perfect schools for you (yes, there's more than one!) if you take the time to do some research.

Students often choose a college by applying wherever their parents went to school, staying in state because their families believe that is all they can afford, or only applying to those schools they’ve heard of in the media or listed in college rankings. And while those considerations might factor into your decision, the most important idea to keep in mind when researching colleges is finding a good fit or match: an academic and social environment that will bring out the very best in you!

If you’ve ever done a college search on the web or browsed the college reference section of your library, you know the possibilities are overwhelming. But that’s a good thing. There are over 3,500 schools in the United States alone, and that means the odds are in your favor that you’ll find a handful of schools that will make you happy.

**TYPES OF SCHOOLS**

Even if you don’t have a clue what you want to study in college, you still need to consider what type of academic environment you’d prefer. Are you a straight-A student who craves an intellectual challenge? Are you a good student who learns best in a less competitive setting? Do you have a particular field of study you’d like to pursue, or do you want the option of a liberal arts education? Are you interested in entering the workforce sooner rather than later or have a particular career goal in mind? Consider this list of schools and the types of programs and degrees each offers, then start thinking about what environment is the right fit for you.

**Universities** are institutions of higher learning that consist of graduate schools, professional schools (medicine, law, business, and the like), and an undergraduate program. A university awards both graduate degrees (masters and doctorate) and undergraduate degrees (bachelor of arts and bachelor of sciences) and tends to be larger and more research-oriented.

**Colleges** are usually smaller than universities, and their emphasis is on undergraduate education. Liberal arts colleges offer a more traditional and general education in subjects such as literature, history, mathematics, natural science, social science, language, art, and music.

Colleges that don’t refer to themselves as “liberal arts” will offer a curriculum with more specialized programs or majors that correlate with specific careers such as journalism, marketing, business, or nursing.

Colleges and universities can be further broken down into multiple categories, like public, private, Ivy League and highly selective, women’s, religiously affiliated, and historically black institutions. Public schools are state-supported institutions of learning that may offer incentives to in-state residents in terms of admission and funding. Private schools are independently funded and self-governing. There’s a major misconception out there that private schools are automatically more expensive than publics, but that’s not necessarily true, especially if you are a student applying to a college out of state. Don’t rule out private schools for cost reasons before doing some research about their actual affordability.

**Art, conservatory, and design schools** offer two- or four-year degrees (bachelor or associate) in such areas as drawing, music, performance, fashion, dance, theater, architecture, and photography. These schools offer very specialized courses of study and often require an additional audition or portfolio in order to be considered for admission.

**Community or technical colleges** offer two-year programs or associate degrees at a lower cost, with the possibility of transferring those credits toward a four-year degree at a university or liberal arts college, or immediately entering the workforce with practical training in fields like health or technology.

**Vocational or trade schools** offer hands-on training and certification in a particular field or occupation, such as automotive services, cosmetology, culinary arts, or information technology. The programs can last anywhere from several weeks to a few years, eventually earning you an associate degree.
When researching schools, browse through the course catalogs to see what departments or classes spark your interest and only consider colleges that offer several majors that appeal to you. You don’t need to decide your major or what you want to study until you get to college, but if you are totally ahead of the game and know right now that you want to study fashion merchandising or astrophysics or child developmental psychology, then you need to make sure you are considering schools that offer those programs. But remember, even if right now you have your heart set on one particular area of study, there’s a chance you may change your mind once you get to campus, so be sure to select a school that intrigues you for more than just its academic offerings.

Since there is such a wide range of colleges and universities, let’s narrow down the selection process to four main criteria: academic compatibility, location, size, and lifestyle.

ACADEMIC COMPATIBILITY
You’ll want to find an academic environment that doesn’t leave you feeling bored or in over your head, so it’s important to consider the statistics. Compare your grades and test scores to the average students admitted to each school in which you are interested. Every school publishes data from the previous year’s admission, and knowing how you stack up with the competition will help you make a realistic college list once it’s time to apply.

Dream schools: colleges where your test scores and grades may be considered at or just below the average admitted student.

Competitive schools: your grades and test scores fall above or well within the average.

Safety schools: your grades and test scores are well above the average for students admitted.

LOCATION
When it comes to location, the three aspects you should consider are climate and geography, neighborhood, and distance from home. You may already have an idea of where you’d like to spend your education, but don’t just rely on those pretty brochures or slick commercials to get an accurate picture of a school’s campus environment. Colleges put their best faces forward in marketing materials, so first figure out what’s important to you and then do the research to find the right fits.

Climate and Geography: When researching schools, it’s important to find out what the weather is while school is in session, since your sunny summer visit may not be an accurate portrayal of what it’ll be like to actually live on campus fall through spring.

Neighborhood: The community surrounding a college campus helps determine the overall vibe of the school. Urban, rural, suburban college town: a school’s location affects the life of the campus. What kinds of resources—shopping, restaurants, nightlife—are available in the neighborhood? Will you feel safe on campus and in the surrounding community? Is there enough going on off- and on-campus, or will you be bored on the weekends? Maybe you don’t want the distractions of a big city or you prefer a quieter environment to concentrate on your studies. Can you afford to bring your car or bike to college or will you need to rely on public transportation? Asking yourself these questions as you research schools will help you figure out what kind of campus neighborhood will best suit your needs and personality.

Distance from home: Another factor you’ll need to consider is how close to home you’d like to be. Do you want to live at home and commute, be close enough to make it home for dinner on a weekday, drive home on the weekends to do your laundry, make monthly visits, or only get home for the holidays? Get a realistic sense of the distance and consider how often you’ll want to make that six-hour drive or three-hour flight—and whether you’ll be able to afford to do so.
SIZE

Since the size of a campus will influence your college experience, it’s important to consider the pros and cons of each and then decide which is the best fit for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergrad Population</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small (under 2,500)</td>
<td>• Low student/teacher ratio; get to know your profs easily in small classes&lt;br&gt;• Easy to get involved in campus organizations&lt;br&gt;• Everyone knows everyone</td>
<td>• Not as much diversity as a larger school&lt;br&gt;• Fewer opportunities for research, study abroad, or specialized majors&lt;br&gt;• Everyone knows everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (2,500–7,500)</td>
<td>• Still small enough to establish relationships with professors&lt;br&gt;• More majors and specializations available than at a smaller school&lt;br&gt;• More diversity of organizations, courses, and student body</td>
<td>• Advising system will probably not be as personalized as at a smaller school&lt;br&gt;• Larger class sizes&lt;br&gt;• Some classes may be taught by graduate students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large (7,500+)</td>
<td>• Great diversity of majors, activities, special programs, and student body&lt;br&gt;• Possibility of major stadium sporting events&lt;br&gt;• Access to more research facilities and bigger libraries</td>
<td>• Large class sizes and little or no interaction with professors or graduate student instructors&lt;br&gt;• Potential for frustrating big-school bureaucracy&lt;br&gt;• Stiff competition for coveted internships or research positions</td>
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CAMPUS LIFESTYLE

Colleges, like people, have unique personalities, so take some time to get to know the reputation of the schools in which you’re interested. You’re going to learn a lot outside, as well as inside the classroom, so choose schools where you can really see yourself getting involved, making friends, and having an impact on campus. Some schools are known for their indomitable spirit, where the social scene revolves around that week’s athletic event. Other campuses boast a healthy level of political and social activism. Some schools identify themselves with a particular religious, cultural, or ethnic group. There are campuses that boast cutting-edge research and technology, campuses that are world-renowned for theater or music performances, and many are known for their thrilling Greek life. Use the College Inventory (on page 125) to check off activities and organizations that spark your interest, then use those categories to help you research schools that might be a good fit for you.

HOW TO GET MORE INFORMATION

Do the research: To get started researching schools, visit their respective websites. Most school sites have an admissions section, and many will offer virtual tours of the campus and the opportunity to email the admissions office or current students to get some of your questions answered. It’s also a good idea to invest in a college guidebook or if you are short on cash, check one out at your high school guidance office or the local library. These references are updated annually and feature detailed information about thousands of universities and some even include student perspectives or ratings on each school.
Use social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter to talk to current students, and check out campus videos on YouTube. There are also some great websites for researching colleges run by notable companies that offer college searches free of charge. Be wary of anyone charging a fee for basic search information; you should be able to find any information you need without having to pay for it. To get you started, visit the Student and Parents Resources on www.gocollegenow.org.

Local college fairs: Check with your high school guidance office to see a schedule of local college fairs. The most well-known ones are hosted by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), where admissions officers from all over the world convene to speak about their respective campuses and academic programs. This is a great opportunity to meet representatives from schools that might be too far away to visit. For information on fairs near you, visit the NACAC website (www.nacacnet.org).

Regional and high school visits by admissions reps: Many schools send admissions officers to different cities to visit high schools and lead information sessions. Check with your guidance counselor to see which schools are scheduled to visit and inquire with admissions offices to find out if information sessions are planned for your city.

The most effective means of getting an impression of a school is to actually visit. Sit in on an admissions information session, take a campus tour, and schedule an overnight visit in a current student’s dorm room. You’ll get a firsthand look at campus life, and you can ask students, professors, and admissions officers any questions you may have about their experiences and the application process. Definitely make a point to visit any nearby colleges that you’re interested in attending, but for those campuses a bit farther away you’ll need to do some advance planning. Your school may organize a college tour over spring break or summer vacation, so be sure to ask your high school guidance counselor about that possibility. Talk to your parents about making a family vacation out of a college tour and maybe even bring a friend with you. Some colleges offer summer programs for high school students, so consider enrolling in a program and visiting other colleges in the area during the summer session.

Don’t worry if at first your college list is 30 schools deep. Even if it all seems overwhelming right now, the more you research you do will make it easier to narrow down that list and make that final decision of where to apply and ultimately where to attend.
THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADVANTAGE

Although the documentary First Generation specifically follows the stories of students with hopes of attending a four-year university, it’s important for every student to find the right college or career fit after high school and to be supported along that path, whether it leads to immediately entering the workforce, vocational school, community or junior college, or a four-year degree.

While community colleges sometimes get a bad rap, the truth is, as Dr. Bill Tierney stated in the film, that they “serve great purposes for many types of students.” And while you may feel pressure from your family or peers to enroll in a four-year university, sometimes community college is the best choice for a student right out of high school.

Here are some reasons to consider why community college might be right for you:

**Easier transition from high school to college** – Many students drop-out during their first year of college because they feel lost in a large university setting, miss their family and friends back home or are overwhelmed by the coursework and expectations. But community colleges can ease that transition from high school to college since it’s possible to enroll somewhere within commuting distance from home, classes are generally smaller, and it could be easier to get the help you need since community college professors are focused more on teaching and less on research, like their colleagues at many public or private four year institutions.

**Save money** – Not only is the actual cost of enrolling at a community college relatively low compared to tuition at public and private four-year institutions, you’ll save an even bigger chunk of change by living at home and foregoing the cost of a paying for a dorm. Plus, if you’re lucky enough to have family cooking your meals and keeping the fridge stocked, that’s even more money that you’ll save on food, not to mention little expenses like shelling out quarters for laundry.

**Improve your grades** – Unlike most four-year schools, community colleges have a universal acceptance policy, meaning they don’t take into consideration your past academic performance. So if your grades weren’t so hot in high school, community college can be a great place to have a fresh academic start. Many two-year institutions have articulation agreements with both public and private institutions that guarantee transfer admission as long as certain GPA course requirements are met, which can be a great way to get admitted to a university that may have been otherwise out of reach.

**Explore your options** – Not sure what you want to study or if college is the right path for you? Community colleges are an affordable way to try classes across a variety of subjects before committing to a major, as well as completing your general education requirements before transferring to a four-year institution.

**Flexibility** – One of the biggest perks community colleges have going for them is the fact that they make it possible to work education around your schedule. They have a reputation for serving non-traditional students, meaning those who have taken time off after high school, are holding down full-time jobs, previously served in the military, or are single parents. All this to say that community colleges make it a priority to offer a variety of classes at various times throughout the day and week. You can enroll part-time, take classes at night, take time off, or go at your own pace, all without being penalized.

**Enter the workforce sooner** – The current job forecast indicates that our country is in need of more skilled workers, that is those with a four-year degree and at least an associates or vocational degree. Since an associates degree can be earned in just two years and sometimes even less, that means you’ll be able to get into the workforce sooner, taking advantage of the $7000 average annual salary boost that comes with earning an associates degree versus the annual earnings of a high school graduate.
CHOOSING A FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY

Investing the time, energy, and financial resources into attending a four-year college or university is certainly not the right path for everyone, but there are some distinct advantages to earning a bachelor’s degree besides just the personal sense of accomplishment. If you have decent grades and you’re meeting the requirements to get into a four-year college, then applying while you’re still in high school will give you the most options once you graduate. If you’re on the fence about what to do after high school, consider these compelling arguments for completing your degree from a four-year university.

Value of a 4-year degree: A bachelor’s degree on your resume not only demonstrates your inherent work ethic, but the more selective the school, the more impressive your degree will be to future employers, which could translate to a higher salary. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the average annual salary for a college graduate is roughly $55,000 compared to $39,000 for those with an associates degree and $33,000 for a high school graduate. And over the course of a lifetime a college graduate will earn $1 million more than a high school graduate and $750K more than someone with an associates or two-year degree.

Generous Financial Aid: While the sticker price for a four-year university may be intimidating, the truth is that the majority of students aren’t paying full-price for their college educations. With the combination of federal financial aid, scholarships, state and institutional grants, and work study, college may be even more affordable than you probably realize. While residents who attend public universities in-state will benefit from reduced tuition as well as state-based financial aid, many private colleges and universities have their own programs to make college more affordable for the average family. Many schools, including Stanford, Duke, Harvard, and Columbia offer a tuition & debt-free college education to admitted students whose families make less than $60K/year. So if finances are a factor in your college decision, don’t assume you won’t be able to afford a four-year college without doing some research, filling out the FAFSA, and applying for financial aid. Visit the Student and Parent Resources at GoCollegeNow.org for more info.

The “Whole College Experience”: More than just taking classes and earning a diploma, an education at a four-year institution is an opportunity to experience all that university life has to offer, like living on campus with a community of students, getting involved in student activities and collegiate sporting events, and the thrill of independence without the harsh realities of adult responsibility. On top of that, attending college is the equivalent of being accepted into a club where membership has its rewards including a lifetime connection to past and future alumni, all of whom can become great networking connections when it comes to mentoring, job search, and recommendations.

Options: Furthering your education increases your options, not only to pursue an advanced degree or graduate school, but also for more job opportunities. Historically the unemployment rate has been considerably lower for college graduates as compared to those with less education. Economic experts predict that by the year 2020 the global market will be short 38 to 40 million college graduates, according to research conducted by the McKinsey Global Institute, which means that four-year degree-holding job applicants will be in high demand. So it’s a pretty safe bet that a college degree will continue to be worth its value in both the near and distant future.

Finish faster: According to the National Center of Education Statistics, students who enroll in a four-year college or university immediately after graduating from high school complete their bachelor’s degree on average two years faster than students who enroll in community college and later transfer to a four-year. Only 1 in 5 community college students will ultimately transfer to a four-year university, either because they find it hard to stay motivated, are distracted by other responsibilities, or might be disillusioned by their “college” experience. So if you have a desire to one day attend a four-year university, it’s important to think about how your choices now will affect your opportunities later.
When my teachers talked to me about applying to college, the first thought that popped into my head was I have no money. I was scared about how I was going to pay for college because as a child growing up, my family and I were living on welfare, and I didn’t have a family member who could help me pay my way to college.

I thought that I wouldn’t be able to afford going to college, but my counselor told me I should fill out the FAFSA which might help me find some money for college. Man, was it hard to do. I really didn’t get the whole process, what information they needed from my parents, and all our tax documents. It was so confusing to me, but my mom made sure to get everything in order and fill it out on time. She called the school when she had questions, and she bugged people until she got the answers she needed. Eventually, we got all the paperwork in order, and I submitted my application for financial aid.

Still, we were stressing out a lot because even though I wanted to go to college, I knew that tuition was expensive and it would be too crazy for me and my family to pay that kind of money. When I got my award letter later in the spring, I was so full of joy because my mom didn’t have to pay anything out of her pocket. Getting my financial aid award was one of my best memories, and it really gave me the confidence to know I could attend college without it being a burden on my family. It also helped my mother to not stress about how she was going to afford it.

My advice is that everyone should fill out the FAFSA and apply for financial aid because it is huge step toward helping you afford college. Don’t over think too much on how you’re going to pay for college or about how hard it is to apply for financial aid. Trust me; it’s hard in the beginning, but it’s all worth it when you get that award letter. Don’t be nervous about paying for college or think that you can’t afford it. There is money out there, so don’t give up on your dreams. I have confidence that if I can make it, so can you.

— Soma
LETTER FROM CECILIA

I did not grow up in a college environment home; my parents did not help me get to college. But fortunately, I was lucky to have teachers, counselors, and coaches guide me on the path to college. I know many of you are going through what I went through in high school. I felt anxious about taking the SAT/ACT, especially since my parents had never spoken to me about it or could offer me any words of advice. “Preparation,” I discovered, is the key to success, but I learned this the hard way. The first time I took the SAT I was not prepared. I didn't study. I wasn't familiar with the test, and I didn’t know what to expect. When I got my scores back, I hadn’t even cracked 1000. I knew if I wanted to get into college I would have to do better, much better than that. So before my second test date, I borrowed an SAT preparation book, studying as much as I could, familiarizing myself with the types of questions and time-saving strategies. I was still nervous when I took it the second time, but when I got my scores back I saw that all my preparation had paid off as I’d scored almost 1000 points higher!

Being a student-athlete helped me stay focused on the prize, which for me was college. It also helped me stay out of trouble since I did not have time for any other activities. Throughout high school, I knew I would be on my own paying for college, but I was not going to let income get in the way of my dream of getting a degree. Running opened doors for me, coaches noticed my dedication and offered me scholarships for college. My coaches were like my parents; they taught me discipline, humility, and determination. AVID was also an incredibly helpful program. It helped me apply to colleges even when I felt as if I was not good enough. I will forever be grateful to my AVID teacher who helped me stay motivated and believe that I could do anything I set my mind to.

Perseverance is a necessary quality for college students. You may not be the smartest, the one with money, the one with supportive parents, the one with many friends, but with hard work and dedication you can make it to college and become someone in life.

— Cecilia
LETTER FROM DONTAY

There was a time when I never thought the slightest about going to college. Growing up I didn’t really like school, and I didn’t care for much of anything. I got into some trouble which caused me to fall behind and school became less important. But when I switched schools and started playing sports, I found out from my coaches and teachers that even with all the mistakes I’d made it wasn’t too late for me to go to college. So with everything in me I changed my thoughts and habits around and did all I could to make it to the next level of education. Being able to have a chance to go to college really inspired and motivated me to push myself to meet the requirements so I could be the first in my family to graduate from high school on time and go to a university.

When I received my first acceptance letter and it was to Cal State University Sacramento, it was one of the best feelings I’d ever had. After that I knew I had to do all I could to stay enrolled and graduate, but it hasn’t been easy. My first semester was probably the hardest semester I had in my college career. With no parents, counselors, or teachers on your back to monitor and check your progress, school can get crazy. From not going to class to not reading my books, my first semester taught me a few things I had to do if I wanted to remain at Sac State. I had to pass two certain classes to stay in college or they would send me to a junior college to complete them. I managed to make it through that first year passing all my classes, but not without tons of pressure on my back. There were other students I knew who started school with me, but they didn’t end up doing well the first semester and never came back. With no monitoring or constant progress reports you’re basically alone in college UNLESS YOU GO FIND HELP.

I had to learn that for myself, but there are a lot of people that do care and want to help you if you seek them out and make an effort. That probably was the biggest adjustment I had to make, taking care of my business when I had to because if I didn’t, I would lose everything I had worked for. I graduated from Sac State with a bachelor’s degree in Family and Consumer Sciences with a concentration in Apparel Marketing and Design. It’s already been the best time of my life, and I feel everybody should have the chance to experience college if they want. So I would tell everybody that has had trouble growing up and thinks it’s too late that anything is possible. If you have a goal or a dream put all your effort into it; if you want it bad enough you can reach it.

— Dontay
WRITING A GREAT COLLEGE ESSAY

Not all colleges require an essay – some require more than one, but if you’re like most students the idea of having to write an essay for the college application can be overwhelming or a complete turn-off. But before you let 500 words stand in the way of applying to the school of your dreams, here’s why the essay is so important and how you can write one that will leave a great impression with the college admissions office.

WHY AN ESSAY?

Believe it or not, the colleges that ask you to write an essay are actually interested in more than just your grades and test scores. They want to get to know you - your story, how you see the world, and what you have to say - and one of the best means of getting your voice heard is by writing an essay. It should give an admissions officer a glimpse into your personality and character, and it’s also a chance to discuss aspects of yourself that may not show up elsewhere in your application, like a story about the family, neighborhood or community in which you grew up or a unique experience that has had an impact on your life.

WRITE TO STAND OUT

Follow these tips to write a memorable college essay.

1. **Start Early**—Allow yourself enough time to brainstorm ideas, write a couple drafts, and proofread the final essays. That means starting the essay writing process at least one month before the application deadline, but working on your essays the summer before senior year is a great way to get comfortable with the 500 word format and makes for one less thing you have to worry about during the fall application season.

2. **Keep it personal**— The essay is your chance to say things that test scores and grades can’t communicate, so you want to give a college a sense of your personality and character. Are you funny? Caring? Serious? Courageous? Creative? Motivated? Tell stories that showcase your strengths, and let your personality shine through in your writing style. Remember that every question asked in the application is an opportunity to talk about yourself. It may feel uncomfortable at first to write so openly (especially to complete strangers!), but rest assured that colleges want to know about your background and the experiences that have shaped you.

3. **Show, Don’t Tell**—It’s important to not just say you’re interested in a particular field but to show how your experiences have shaped your interests. That means illustrating how events, books, magazines, people, and moments have inspired you to pursue your educational and life goals. Show how you continue to cultivate your interests and talents at school, home and in your community.

4. **Proofread**— Keep in mind that the college essay is first and foremost a writing exercise to demonstrate your knowledge of the English language as well as your ability to organize your thoughts to make a statement. The biggest essay buzz-kills are spelling mistakes, grammatical errors, and typos. So don’t just rely on your computer’s spellcheck. Have someone you trust read your essay to look for anything out of place.

TOPICS TO AVOID

Remember that the college essay is a chance to share a part of yourself, so the cool thing about that is that there are no wrong answers! However, you’ll want to steer clear of these overused and inappropriate essay topics

- **Don’t** use an old homework assignment or report as your essay.
- **Don’t** tackle a topic that cannot be done justice in 500 words or less, like how you would achieve world peace.
- **Don’t** use the essay to make excuses for poor grades.
- **Don’t** write about other people’s experiences; keep it personal!
- **Don’t** use the essay space as a resume for accomplishments and activities previously mentioned in the application.
- **Do** write what you know, be yourself, add descriptive details, and don’t forget to proofread!!! An awesome essay can be the tipping point that pushes a good application into the acceptance bin, so take some time to think about what sets you apart and how you can best share your unique story in the admissions essay.
“ACING THE INTERVIEW”

Adapted from Seventeen’s Guide to Getting Into College

Many schools include an interview as part of their application process. Sometimes these are on-campus interviews conducted by admissions officers or faculty members; many schools recruit alumni volunteers to interview prospective applicants in local areas. The purpose of the interview is twofold: it’s just as much about giving you the opportunity to ask about the interviewer’s college experience as about giving the college an impression of who you are. Be sure to find out if interviews are part of the admissions process at the schools you're applying to and when you should expect to be contacted for one.

Prepare for the college interview just as you would for a job interview. Do your research about the school so you can ask your interviewer questions that demonstrate you’ve put some thought into applying. Following are a list of questions you may get asked in a college admissions interview. If you prepare an answer for each of these, chances are you’ll be able to handle any question that comes your way. Practice answering these questions with a friend or family member. If you’ve gone over your answers out loud, you’ll be much more comfortable come interview day.

1. Why are you interested in this school?
2. What classes do you like best?
3. What do you plan to study in college?
4. What is one of your favorite books, movies, shows, or songs from the past year?
5. How would your peers describe you and your personality?
6. How did you spend the past couple of summers?
7. What activities take up your time; which is the most enjoyable?
8. How do you see yourself having an impact on a college campus?
9. Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten years?
10. What makes you stand out in your school community?
11. How do you feel you’ve changed since beginning high school?
12. What is your greatest strength? Your greatest weakness?
13. If you could have dinner with one person, living or dead, who would it be?
14. What is your most significant accomplishment?
15. Who do you want to be most proud of you and why?

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR INTERVIEWER

1. Why did you decide to attend your school?
2. What did you like most and least about your college experience?
3. How has your education helped you reach your career goals?
4. What kinds of students do you think benefit most from the educational experience offered at your school?
5. Do you have any advice to offer me?
INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Follow these steps to make a great impression on interview day!

√ Confirm the time and location with your interviewer the day before.

√ Print out directions and make sure you have a reliable way of getting there.

√ Choose an outfit that you would wear to a nice dinner out with your parents. Show your personality, but don’t wear anything that might be too revealing or considered offensive.

√ Arrive on time.

√ Have a breath mint before the interview, but get rid of that chewing gum!

√ Do a double-take in the mirror to check your teeth.

√ Shake the interviewer’s hand.

√ Make eye contact as you talk to the interviewer.

√ Ask the interviewer two or three thoughtful questions about the school and his or her experience.

√ Get contact information from your interviewer and send a thank-you email or note a few days after your interview.
“MAKING THE GRADE”

Adapted from Seventeen’s Guide to Getting Into College

Your high school transcript is the single most important element of any college application, so if you take the time to do your homework, get good grades, and take challenging classes, you will open up a greater number of possibilities, not only for college admission but also for scholarships.

HOW ADMISSIONS OFFICERS EVALUATE TRANSCRIPTS

Your academic record is a good indication of how you might handle a college course load. Since admissions officers understand the intensity of their academics, they want to know that you’ll succeed in their classrooms and that you won’t be frustrated or contemplate dropping out. But admissions officers do more than just evaluate your raw GPA; they also take into account the context of your academic achievements. They are looking at your cumulative record of academics based on the reputation of the school you attend (public, magnet, private, parochial, homeschool, community college) and the rigor of your classes (standard, honors, advanced placement (AP), international baccalaureate (IB), college prep). They do their homework in order to understand a student’s achievements within her school environment.

Admissions officers are going to look more closely at how you perform in eleventh and twelfth grades since these are your most recent academic records and often the courses taken in junior and senior year are more difficult than those in ninth and tenth grades. However, your entire high school transcript will come under scrutiny, so that means you need to work hard on academics beginning in ninth grade.

But don’t lose hope if you didn’t take your academics seriously in ninth and tenth grades. Admissions officers realize that not every student has the advantage of realizing how important grades are and some students don’t get their act together until later in their high school career. If this situation applies to you, you’ll need to be prepared for the question admissions officers ask: “What happened in this student’s life to cause the shift in grades?” The answer should be addressed in a counselor or teacher recommendation letter, but you may also think about including an additional one-paragraph statement in your application explaining your situation and the circumstances surrounding your lower grades.

GRADES VERSUS CHALLENGING COURSES

Is it better to get an A in a regular course or a B in an advanced course? The answer, of course—which no one wants to hear—is that colleges want to see you get the best grades you can while also taking challenging courses.

Colleges want to see that you’re making the most of the opportunities at your fingertips. That means taking some tougher courses like honors, advanced placement, and international baccalaureate classes. But don’t worry if your school doesn’t offer any of these: admissions officers take into account what’s actually available at your particular high school. If you find that you’re overwhelmed by too many advanced courses and your grades are suffering across the board, focus on taking the advanced classes in the subject areas that are of the greatest interest to you and that you plan to continue studying in college.

Regardless of what class you are in and what your school offers, you should focus on getting the best grades you can. Great grades count for a lot because a good GPA proves that you are capable of performing well over the course of three or four years. If you get good grades and take challenging classes, you’ll be on the road to making a good impression with the college admissions office.

PLANNING YOUR CLASS SCHEDULE

Depending upon what type of college you’d like to attend, there are different recommended paths of study. Every high school has a minimum set of requirements you must meet in order to graduate, but that won’t necessarily be enough to get admitted to a four-year university. Plan your high school course of study based on the most selective college you’d like to attend with the most stringent course requirements. For example if you aim to fulfill the requirements for getting into Harvard University, then chances are you’ll meet or exceed the requirements at all the other places you plan to apply.
**Ninth- and tenth-graders:** Find out the recommended course schedules including the minimum number of years in English, math, science, history, and foreign language at the colleges you’d like to attend by visiting their admissions website or consulting a college guide.

**Eleventh- or twelfth-graders:** Keep working to meet the requirements of your favorite schools. Design your high school class schedule so you’ll be a compelling applicant, and if you feel your transcript isn’t as impressive as it could be, ramp up your schedule accordingly.

If you have a particular interest in a certain subject or career, one way to impress an admissions office is to demonstrate that passion with your academics. Take as many classes as you can in that area. For example, if you know you want to be pre-med in college, take whatever medical-related courses your high school offers, like advanced courses in biology or genetics. Or if design has captured your heart, take as many art-related courses as you can while still fulfilling the basic requirements.

**WHEN YOU DON’T MAKE THE GRADE**

Don’t beat yourself up if you receive a lower grade than you desired in a particular class. Evaluate what factors contributed to the final grade.

- Tough subject matter
- Overcommitted schedule
- Difficulty understanding teacher
- Additional stress factors (sickness, death in the family, moving, or major break-up)

Is this a one-time incident, or do you think you could benefit from tutoring? Evaluating the factors that contributed to your grades can you help you put your academics in perspective, give you a sense of your strengths and weaknesses, and help you figure out how to plan your courses in order to maximize your learning potential.

Remember that the point of getting an education isn’t to get straight As or a near-perfect GPA. We all have strengths and weaknesses, and they start to show in high school, when the curriculum includes a variety of subjects. Some may come easier to you than others. Some may be a struggle. You may find that you utterly despise a certain subject, and if you’re lucky you may discover an area of study that you absolutely love. The purpose of an education is to give you the tools to understand and analyze the world, to think for yourself, and to help you figure out how you as an individual fit into the larger scheme of things. If you can graduate from high school with a better sense of how the world works, of your interests, talents, and abilities, then you’ve achieved something from your education, no matter what your report card says.

**NINTH GRADE:**

- ✓ Do your homework. You might not get all the answers right, but doing it will earn the respect of your teachers. And remember, colleges look at your grades from all four years of high school, so do your best.
- ✓ Establish good relationships with your teachers. Actively participate in class discussions. Ask questions. Your teachers were college students once and will be good resources once you begin the college search.
- ✓ Practice good study habits. Maybe doing your homework right after school is when you’re most alert or maybe you work better after dinner. Figure out a schedule that works for you and stick with it!
- ✓ Take electives that explore your interests. Electives are an opportunity to discover new endeavors or to rule out possibilities you once found appealing.
- ✓ Plan ahead. Make sure you are aware of the minimum academic recommendations at the colleges that interest you and plan your schedule accordingly.
- ✓ Enroll in a foreign language. Most schools require a minimum of two years, and top institutions will look for a three- or four-year commitment. Get started now, so that in eleventh grade you’ll have more options available to you.
TENTH GRADE:

✓ Find out what advanced programs your high school offers. Identify the subjects you enjoy and in which you are excelling and consider challenging yourself by enrolling in advanced classes.

✓ Read unassigned books. Develop your vocabulary and intellectual curiosity by reading unassigned books in the subject areas that interest you.

✓ Meet with your assigned guidance counselor. Take the initiative to introduce yourself to your guidance counselor and ask what resources are available to help you in your college search and application process.

✓ If you haven’t already, now is the time to enroll in a foreign language. Look at the options available at your high school and think about what language would be most beneficial to your future career plans.

ELEVENTH GRADE:

✓ Focus on your grades. If you haven’t accumulated the most stellar GPA, this is the year to get focused and put forth your best effort.

✓ Beef up your schedule with advanced classes. If you are applying to top schools, you should be enrolled in several advanced courses. Also, sign up for any AP or IB exams administered during junior year.

✓ Make a plan for senior year. Make sure you have taken or will take all the classes that will make you the most competitive applicant for admission to the schools of your choice.

TWELFTH GRADE:

✓ This is the home stretch! Continue to maintain your grades, even after you turn in your college applications. If your grades take a significant dive in the latter half of your senior year, you could find yourself starting college under academic probation—or, worse yet, your college acceptance could be revoked! So save the relaxing for your well-earned summer vacation.
“FINDING THE CASH”

Adapted from Seventeen’s Guide to Getting Into College

When it comes to affording college, there’s just one thing you have to believe: you can. If you want to go and you’ve worked hard in high school, you will be able to pay for a college education. Of course, that doesn’t necessarily mean you’ll be able to afford any college; you’ll still need to take into account the budget you and your parents have set and assess the financial aid and scholarships you receive. But the earlier you start planning and looking for money to pay for school, the better your chances of finding it. The great thing is that you aren’t chasing after some mythic treasure; it definitely exists. You just need to get your hands on the maps that will get you there.

Most dreams have a price, and when it comes to college, the sticker price can seem overwhelming. The average cost of attending a private or out-of-state public university is roughly $160,000 for four years, and that doesn’t even cover money spent on food, books, research, laboratory fees, supplies, transportation, and any other miscellaneous expenses you might encounter. In many places, that’s enough to buy a family home or at least a small condo, and at the age of seventeen, few kids have that kind of money lying around! But while the price of a college education can be intimidating, just like the car on the lot, you don’t have to pay the amount listed on the window to drive away with the car. The good news is that there is money out there—in the form of financial aid, grants, and scholarships. You just need to find it.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid is available at all colleges and universities, and its purpose is to defray the cost of tuition, room and board, fees, and other expenses. While each university will have a different method for determining a student’s eligibility, the types of aid offered are typically the same.

Need-based aid can be provided by the state and federal governments, as well as the university or college. Schools will use a combination of their institutional application, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and the College Scholarship Service Profile (CSS Profile) to help them determine how much money you and your family can afford to pay for college. Once your eligibility for need-based aid is determined, funds will be distributed in the form of grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study. If you would like an estimate of the amount of federal aid you may be eligible for, you can use the online forecasting calculator at fafsa4caster.ed.gov.

Grants and scholarships are the best type of aid you can receive because they’re nontaxable and don’t require repayment. Whatever amount you receive in grant and scholarship money will be automatically deducted from the total cost of attendance. Grant money is typically doled out by the government or institution in the form of financial aid, while scholarships are often awarded by schools or organizations based on a performance of some kind say in the area of academics, athletics, the arts, or a winning essay.

- Federal Pell Grant: Awarded to students with greatest need, based on information gathered from the FAFSA; anyone whose income falls within a specified range determined by the government each year receives this grant.
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant: Students who are eligible for the Federal Pell Grant may also receive this additional grant from the college.
- State Grant: Awarded to students primarily based on need, although sometimes merit may qualify a student. These grants are typically not transferable between states.

Work-study is a nontaxable amount of money that a college or university will let you earn through an on-campus job.

Loans must be repaid. However, most government-based education loans are offered at lower interest rates and don’t start collecting interest until a student leaves college or graduates. If you receive loans as part of your financial aid package, the lender will pay the allocated amount each year and that amount will be deducted from the total cost of attendance.

When considering borrowing a student loan it is important to only borrow what you need and make sure to take advantage of all your low cost options such as grants, scholarships and work-study first! Students are required to complete the FAFSA form in order to be eligible for the Federal Direct Stafford and Perkins Loan program. The financial aid office will determine the loan amount you are eligible to borrow under each program.
There are five types of loans that can be used to help pay for school.

- **Federal Perkins Loan:** Available to students with exceptional financial need, repayment of these loans will be nine months after graduation or nine months from the last date of attendance. A fixed interest rate is determined at the outset of the loan, and no interest accrues while in college. Not all schools participate in the Perkins Loan program, so check with the financial aid office at the school you are interested in attending to see if it is offered.

- **Federal Direct Stafford (Subsidized):** Available to students attending college at least half-time, the government pays the interest on these loans while the student is enrolled in college. These loans are offered at variable low interest rates and must be repaid beginning six months after graduation or leaving college. A student must demonstrate need to qualify.

- **Federal Direct Stafford (Unsubsidized):** Also available to students attending college at least half-time, these loans are offered at a low variable interest rate, but the student (or family) is responsible for the interest that accrues while in college. The loan can be paid while the student is in college or deferred until graduation or after the student has left college. A student is not required to demonstrate need in order to qualify for this loan.

- **Federal Direct PLUS:** These are credit-based loans offered by the federal government and available to dependent undergraduate students. A student is not required to demonstrate need in order to qualify for this loan.

- **Private Student or Alternative Loans:** These are credit-based loans provided by banks and other lenders to help pay for educational costs.

**APPLYING FOR NEED-BASED AID**

**Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA):** How It Works

Regardless of your income, all families should complete Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) annually because all federal aid and most state and institutional aid require it. This is a government form that estimates a family’s ability to pay for college based on such information as the previous year’s income, assets, savings, and available cash. The information collected on the FAFSA determines whether you qualify for federal, state, and institutional aid in the form of grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study. The FAFSA cannot be submitted prior to January 1 for the following academic year, but it should be completed as early as possible in order to expedite your financial aid review. Remember, schools have priority deadlines for applying for financial aid, so make sure to find out the deadline dates and fill out the FAFSA early. If you would like an estimate of the amount of federal aid you may be eligible for, you can use the online forecasting calculator at [fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://fafsa4caster.ed.gov)

**What You Need to Fill Out the Application**

The FAFSA is available online ([www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)). You and your parents will need to have the following information on hand to complete the application:

- Most recent federal tax forms
- Record of prior year earnings (W-2, 1099, etc.)
- Record of nontaxable income (AFDC, social security, veteran’s benefits)
- Current bank statements
- Record of business, farm, stocks, bonds, and other investment

If when you are completing the FAFSA your family’s most current year’s tax returns are not yet available, continue to file the application with an estimation using the previous year’s tax return.
ESTIMATED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION (EFC)

The purpose of filling out the FAFSA is to determine how much money you and your family can contribute to your college education. This amount is referred to as your Estimated Family Contribution (EFC), which will be divided into the expected parent contribution and expected student contribution. The expected student contribution is based on any assets and what you can reasonably earn over the summer and during the school year. The parent portion of the EFC is based on annual income, assets, and savings that can reasonably be put toward your education.

Once your EFC has been determined, it is subtracted from the total cost of attendance of the school to which you have been admitted. The cost of attendance includes tuition, room and board, books, supplies, fees, and travel expenses for one year. The difference equals your family’s financial need. So, for example, if the FAFSA determines that your EFC is $17,000, then no matter the cost of where you apply, universities will know that your family can only reasonably be expected to contribute $17,000 that year toward the cost of attending college.

Now, just because the FAFSA determines your EFC is X amount, that doesn’t necessarily mean that the schools you want to attend will be able to make up the difference in your financial aid package. The financial aid practices at schools vary, so you’ll need to do some research to determine how your family’s financial needs will be met. The “Financial Aid Questionnaire” (included) lists important questions to ask each admissions office, and you can also visit the U.S. Department of Education’s Net Price Calculator website to get a more realistic idea of how much it will cost to attend the college of your choice. http://collegecost.ed.gov/netpricecenter.aspx

APPLYING FOR MERIT-BASED AID

In addition to the FAFSA, some schools may require an institutional application, which provides more detailed information to help a particular school determine the amount of financial aid to offer and many schools offer merit-based scholarships that require a separate application. Be sure to research all the scholarship opportunities at each school to which you apply and determine whether or not you meet the basic requirements for consideration. This could include a minimum GPA; an intended field of study; a particular ethnic, religious, or cultural background; a special athletic, musical, or artistic talent, or being the child of a parent or grandparent who attended that school. You may have to write an additional essay in order to be a candidate for an institutional merit-based scholarship, but a few more hours of writing will be worth the thousands of dollars in aid you may receive each year.

Beyond need-based aid provided by the federal and state governments and the college you choose to attend, there are thousands of merit-based and outside scholarships available. Just by taking the PSAT/NMSQT, you put yourself in the running for a National Merit or Achievement Scholarship and at some schools being a National Merit or Achievement Scholar can get you a full-tuition scholarship. While this is one of the best-known scholarship opportunities, there are billions of dollars in scholarships available each year that are based on a variety of criteria, including but not limited to: gender, race, religion, nationality, state or city of birth, GPA, athletic ability, school spirit, leadership, community service, excellence in math and science, intended major, intended career . . . the list goes on and on! Remember it’s never too early to start researching scholarships, so sign up for scholarship alerts and start applying. For more information on scholarship opportunities, check out the Student and Parent Resources at GoCollegeNow.org.

DOS & DON’TS

Applying for financial aid can be an intimidating and not exactly exciting process. It means forms and tax returns and parent signatures and sometimes even essays, all of which can be a total headache. However, the earlier and more thoroughly you complete the process, the better off you’ll be when your acceptance letters start rolling in with thick financial aid packages accompanying them.

Do make sure you read all the directions for each school carefully! Most schools ask for standard information; however, you may be applying to an institution that requires additional material.

Do take note of all the deadlines and mail or complete the online applications by or before the dates they need to be received! Remember, schools have priority deadlines for applying for financial aid, so be sure to find out the deadline dates and fill out the FAFSA form early. Go to fafsa.ed.gov anytime after January 1 to apply for the upcoming year.

Don’t forget to make or print copies of all the forms you complete! If one of the schools notifies you that information is missing, you’ll be glad you have a copy on hand to fax back or resubmit to them. If you don’t receive notification, call the financial aid office to check that your file has been received and is complete.
Don’t borrow more money than you need! First take advantage of the free money available in grants, scholarships, and work study before responsibly considering loans to fund your education.

Do put the cost of college into perspective! The idea of going into some amount of debt for your education may seem like a bad idea, but remember that college may be one of the best investments you’ll ever make, opening up greater job opportunities and giving you the skills to impress employers. Depending on your eventual career, there are some fields, like teaching, that offer repayment of student loans as incentive for accepting job offers in certain underserved areas. And student loan providers are known for providing low-interest rates and manageable payment plans that work with your budget following graduation.

Don’t let financial obstacles prevent you from achieving your education goals! Do what you can ahead of time to start saving for college. Write out a budget for saving over the summer and school year. Make a commitment to save a certain percentage of your earnings and put it toward your college fund. Apply for every scholarship you can. And while financial aid can be a seemingly complicated process, the rewards are great when you successfully navigate all the paperwork and find you’ve received the grants or loans you need. If you start early and do the research, you can find the resources to pay for college.

Do get your questions answered! The “Financial Aid Questionnaire” (on page 128) includes ten questions you should ask the college admissions or financial aid office at each school to which you apply. Make copies, take them on your campus visits, and fill one out for each of the schools where you are applying so you can refer back to it.

Do visit GoCollegeNow.org! There is tons of money out there to help you cover the costs of your college education—you just need to know where to find it and which resources are right for you! Visit the Student and Parent Resources on GoCollegeNow.org for additional tips, tools and information to start your financial aid journey.
GETTING YOUR CHILD TO COLLEGE — NO DEGREE REQUIRED!

TIPS FOR PARENTS & MENTORS

For many parents the idea of their son or daughter going to college is exciting but also overwhelming. There’s a lot to think about and plan for, and even if you’re a parent that graduated from college – so much has changed in the past few years in terms of college admissions and financial aid. But the good news is that there is a wealth of information about how to prepare and apply for college, so even if this is your first time going through the process, rest assured that there are resources to help you and your teenager find the best college fit at an affordable price.

It all begins with knowing when to get started and how to find the information you need.

START EARLY: GET A COLLEGE MINDSET

Many students wait until senior year before they start thinking about their college plans, but the truth is that students should actually start planning for college in middle school or junior high. Why so early, you might ask? Well, that’s because colleges take into consideration all four years of high school (9th-12th) including the classes a student takes, his or her GPA, as well as any activities, leadership or awards received.

It’s a good idea to have a conversation with your son or daughter in the 7th or 8th grade to prepare them for what they’ll need to do in high school in order to get into college. Consider purchasing a college guidebook which can range in price from $15-$35 is a great investment, since it can serve as a great resource of information and help you and your child make informed decisions all throughout high school.

GET ORGANIZED

In the years leading up to college, you’ll start receiving a flood of information in the form of college brochures, scholarship and financial aid forms, and notifications from your child’s guidance office. If you don’t have a way to organize all this information, it can be overwhelming or worse yet, you might end up losing track of important papers.

So help your teen create a simple filing system with dividers labeled for college brochures, scholarships, financial aid, as well as one for your child’s awards and accomplishments. By the time senior year rolls around, you’ll easily be able to access the information you need to help your teen apply for college.

In addition, make sure whatever college guidebook you purchase has a planner listing everything you and your teen need to do throughout high school to prepare for college, things like signing up for the SAT or ACT, what classes to take and when, the timeline for applying for college and financial aid. Get in the habit of keeping a calendar on the refrigerator or in your teen’s bedroom that lists important college admission dates and deadlines.

KNOW WHERE TO LOOK

1. Visit the High School College & Career Center— this is your most important resource where you’ll find information about financial aid, local scholarships, and college deadlines and requirements. Meet with your teen’s counselor at the beginning of high school to learn about the admission requirements for public and private colleges.

2. Attend a College Night or College Fair – Most school districts will typically hold some kind of college information session where admission representatives from schools across the country will attend to share information about their programs and how to apply. It’s a great place to get your questions answered directly from the colleges!

3. Get familiar with websites like CollegeBoard.com, and FinAid.org – Here you’ll find the latest information on scholarships, test deadlines, and college admissions – and they all have parent versions of their websites, so these are great resources for getting the answers to the questions you may have.
DON’T BE AFRAID TO ASK

One of the best resources you have is the power of asking. If you’re unsure about an admissions requirement, the cost of applying, or how to fill out the college or financial aid forms, talk to your teen’s college counselor, call the college admissions or financial aid office, or find someone – another parent or a current college student –who has recently been through the college admissions process and may be able to answer your question. And if English is not your first language, request bilingual materials from the high school counseling office or ask if there is someone who can explain the materials in your primary language. Visit the Student and Parent Resources on gocollegenow.org to get started.

Even if now applying to college seems like a difficult and overwhelming experience, know that there are individuals at the high school and colleges and at many non-profits who are excited to help you get figure out the best college for your teen. So don’t be afraid to ask for help – and once you’ve been through the process yourself, you’ll be able to lend a hand to another family.
FIRST GENERATION
A GUIDE TO COLLEGE
6
SUPPLEMENTAL STUDENT WORKSHEETS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 Advanced</th>
<th>3 Proficient</th>
<th>2 Basic</th>
<th>1 Below Basic</th>
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<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level _______</td>
<td>The writing clearly addresses all parts of the prompt and provides specific pieces of evidence in a logical order.</td>
<td>The writing addresses most parts of the prompt. Evidence is presented in the writing in a logical order.</td>
<td>The writing addresses some parts of the prompt. Evidence presented in the writing may not be in a logical order.</td>
<td>There is little or no evidence of addressing the prompt. Evidence is presented randomly.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thesis</strong></td>
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<td>Level _______</td>
<td>Provides a strong, three pronged thesis statement.</td>
<td>Provides a thesis statement, but may not be three pronged.</td>
<td>Provides a thesis statement, but it is weak or unclear.</td>
<td>No evidence of a thesis statement.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
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<td>Level _______</td>
<td>The writing is structured with an introduction, body, and conclusion.</td>
<td>The writing is structured with an introduction, body, and conclusion.</td>
<td>The writing is structured with an introduction, body, and conclusion.</td>
<td>The writing has no clear organizational structure.</td>
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<td><strong>English Language Conventions</strong></td>
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<td>Level _______</td>
<td>The writing contains few, if any, errors.</td>
<td>The writing contains some errors; however, the errors do not interfere with reader’s understanding of the writing.</td>
<td>The writing contains multiple errors. The errors may interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.</td>
<td>The writing contains multiple serious errors. The errors interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.</td>
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</table>

Additional Comments:

TOTAL- ____________________
PEER EDITING

Directions: Use this form with a peer to edit his/her personal statement. Remember to review the prompt to ensure the student has answered it completely.

Author’s name ________________________________

Title of the paper ________________________________________ If there is no title, suggest one.

Step 1- Read the paper for content. Read the whole way through.

The three topics presented in this paper are:

1. ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

One sentence that is well written is:
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Step 2- Read the paper for mechanical errors. Mark and respond.

1. Did the paper include proper capitalization? YES NO
Give an example _________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. Did the paper include proper spelling? YES NO
Give an example _________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. Did the paper include proper punctuation? YES NO
Give an example _________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Step 3- On the author’s paper, give suggestions for further “clean up” tips, there should be at least five suggestions.
**COLLEGE INVENTORY**

Check off the items in each section that are of interest or important to you. Then use this chart as you visit schools or research on the Internet.

**SIZE**
- __ Small (under 2,500 undergraduate students )
- __ Medium (2,500-7,500 undergraduate students)
- __ Large (7,500+ undergraduate students)

**LOCATION**

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<th>GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCE</th>
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<td>_____ sunny all the time</td>
<td>_____ mountains</td>
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<td>_____ 1–2 hours driving distance</td>
<td>_____ winter wonderland</td>
<td>_____ beach</td>
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<td>_____ 5–10 hours driving distance</td>
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<td>_____ a plane flight away</td>
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<td>_____ countryside</td>
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## MAJORS & PROGRAMS OF STUDY

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List Additional Majors of Interest Here:
### ACTIVITIES, CLUBS, ATHLETICS

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<td>Religious Groups</td>
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<td>Ice Skating</td>
<td>Sailing</td>
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<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Improv/Sketch Comedy</td>
<td>Service Organizations</td>
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<td>Instrumental Music</td>
<td>Skiing/Snowboarding</td>
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<td>Lacrosse</td>
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<td>LGBQT</td>
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<td>Model United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>Quiz Bowl</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**List Additional Activities of Interest Here:**
FINANCIAL AID QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of School: ____________________________________________________________

1. What is the total cost of attendance?

2. Does applying for financial aid factor into the admissions decision?

3. What factors outside of financial resources determine a student’s financial aid package (i.e., grades, test scores, class rank)?

4. Will the college or university meet my full or partial demonstrated need as determined by the FAFSA?

5. Are there scholarships or grants available based on merit, and what are the requirements for consideration?

6. Is outside scholarship or grant money used to replace aid in the college financial package?

7. What kind of work-study opportunities are available on campus?

8. Is financial aid guaranteed for all years of attendance?

9. Is financial aid conditional on academic standing?

10. Will the university match other schools’ offers of financial aid?
FIRST GENERATION
A GUIDE TO COLLEGE

QUIZZES & TESTS
QUIZ #1

Estimated quiz time: 10 minutes.

PURPOSE:

• To test knowledge and comprehension of the in-class, reading and homework assignments.

ANSWER KEY:

10 Total Points Possible

Each question is worth 1 point.

1. False
2. False
3. False
4. B
5. C
6. A
7. D
8. D
9. A
10. C
Directions: Based on your learning from the Assumptions pre-test, answer questions 1-3 by circling “True” or “False”.

1. The fees listed on the college web sites and publications are the fees for all students.
   - True
   - False

2. Colleges are looking for well-rounded students; colleges are not looking for specialists.
   - True
   - False

3. School counselors will always tell you what you need to know in order to get into schools.
   - True
   - False

Directions: For questions 4-10 write the letter that corresponds with the correct answer on the line provided.

4. What does the term “GPA” stand for?
   a. Grade Point Accumulative
   b. Grade Point Average
   c. Graduate Point Average
   d. Graduate Point Accumulative

5. What type of degree is a student going for if he/she is attempting to earn a BA?
   a. A 2-year degree
   b. A 3-year degree
   c. A 4-year degree
   d. A masters degree

6. What type of degree is a student going for if he/she is attempting to earn an AS?
   a. A 2-year degree
   b. A 3-year degree
   c. A 4-year degree
   d. A masters degree
7. What are the names of the main two standardized tests students take that are accepted by colleges and universities as an entrance requirement?
   a. CSAT and PLAN
   b. ACT and PSAT
   c. SAT and NMSQT
   d. SAT and ACT

8. When considering where to go to college, the article “Know Your Schools” suggests to consider attending a college/university because of all of these reasons EXCEPT—
   a. location
   b. size of school
   c. campus lifestyle
   d. where your boyfriend or girlfriend is attending

9. What is the author’s definition of a “dream school”?
   a. colleges where your test scores and grades may be considered at or just below the average admitted student.
   b. your grades and test scores fall above or well within the average.
   c. your grades and test scores are well above the average for students admitted.
   d. The best college or university in the U.S.

10. What is the author’s definition of a “safety school”?
    a. colleges where your test scores and grades may be considered at or just below the average admitted student.
    b. your grades and test scores fall above or well within the average.
    c. your grades and test scores are well above the average for students admitted.
    d. a college or university with a very safe campus environment
QUIZ #2

Estimated Quiz Time: 15 minutes

PURPOSE:
- To test knowledge and comprehension of the in-class, reading and homework assignments.

ANSWER KEY:
10 Total Points Possible

Questions 1-7 are worth 1 point each

Question 8 is worth 3 possible points

1. D
2. A
3. B
4. A
5. C
6. C
7. D
8. Look for answers that include: 1) a clear point of view; 2) a road map for the essay; 3) a coherent and complete sentence. Each aspect of the response earns one point for a total of three points.
Directions: For questions 1-7 write the letter that corresponds with the correct answer on the line provided.

1. Some of the reasons to go to a community college include all of the following EXCEPT--
   a. Community college provides an easier transition from high school to college.
   b. You can save money by attending community college.
   c. You can explore your options while completing general education requirements.
   d. You are more likely to drop out of college if you attend community college.

2. According to the authors, one of the biggest perks of attending community college is flexibility, which means—
   a. You have a greater ability to work education around your personal schedule.
   b. You can take classes like Yoga that increase your flexibility.
   c. Teachers will give you better grades because they are more flexible with standards.
   d. You can improve your grades if you did poorly in high school.

3. What does it mean when the author says you get “the whole college experience” when you attend a 4-year university?
   a. 4-year universities are the only places to earn degrees.
   b. 4-year universities give you opportunities to live with other students and get involved in out-of-class activities.
   c. 4-year universities offer generous financial aid.
   d. 4-year universities are very expensive.

4. A thesis statement is--
   a. The most important sentence in an essay.
   b. Always found at the end of the essay.
   c. Always the first sentence of an essay.
   d. Made to show many different points of view, not just one big idea.

5. Which thesis statement shows a road map for the essay?
   a. Cecilia might succeed, but she might fail.
   b. Dontay is most likely to succeed in college because he has changed his life around.
   c. Jess is most likely to succeed in college because she has a job, a supportive mother, and a reason to get out of the city.
   d. Soma is most likely to succeed in college because he is involved with his culture.
6. A student wants to write an essay where she argues Cecilia will succeed in getting to college. Which thesis is BEST for her essay?

a. Cecilia is most likely to succeed in college because she is an AP student.

b. Cecilia will not succeed in going to college because she is an athlete, her parents don’t want her to go, and she may not know how to apply.

c. Cecilia is most likely to succeed in college because she is a competitive athlete, an AVID student, and an AP student.

d. Cecilia is most likely to succeed in college because she is an AVID student and all AVID students get into college.

7. What is the best response(s) to a naysayer who says, “If you don’t know what you are going to do with your life, college is a waste of time”?

a. “College, especially community college, gives me the chance to figure things out with little risk.”

b. “People with college degrees earn more money over the course of their lifetime than those without. I’m not wasting time, I’m finding a way to earn more money.”

c. “College degrees will make me more likely to be hired when I do figure out what I want to do.”

d. All of the above.

Directions: Short Answer- Answer the question in depth and detail in the space provided.

8. Write a thesis statement defending why you are likely to go to college. Be sure to include a road map for your essay!

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QUIZ #3

Estimated Quiz Time: 15 minutes

PURPOSE:
- To test knowledge and comprehension of the in-class, reading and homework assignments.

ANSWER KEY:
10 Total Points Possible

Questions 1-7 are worth 1 point each

Question 8 is worth 3 possible points

1.  B
2.  A
3.  C
4.  C
5.  A
6.  D
7.  B
8.  Look for answers where students list three ideas related to college preparation that they might be able to accomplish in the next month, including but not limited to: Meet with my guidance counselor, talk with someone who has gone to college about the experience; look for a job and start saving money; go for after-school tutoring; sign up for AP classes; visit a nearby university.
Directions: For questions 1-3 write the letter that corresponds with the correct answer on the line provided.

________ To write a strong college essay or personal statement, the author suggests all of the following EXCEPT:

a. To start writing it early
b. Not to reveal personal details
c. To show, not tell
d. Proofread your work

________ 2. If your school requires an interview, which of the following is a good tip to follow?

a. Ask the interviewer two or three thoughtful questions about the school.
b. Don’t make eye contact.
c. Talk about the other schools where you are applying.
d. Arrive late.

________ 3. Which of the following statements is true about how college admissions officers view the classes you take in high school?

a. Colleges don’t care about your grades; they just want you to take rigorous classes.
b. If your school doesn’t offer college prep classes like AP, IB or Honors, your application won’t be given serious consideration.
c. Colleges consider both your grades and the types of classes that you take in high school.
d. Your GPA does not reflect your ability to do well in school.

Directions: Identify the first generation student based on the information provided.

________ 4. This student is an athlete, participated in music, attended Long Beach State University, and then was forced to transfer to community college due to failing grades.

a. Dntoy
b. Cecilia
c. Soma
d. Jess
5. This student traveled a long way to get to high school, participated in sports, attended Sacramento State University, and earned a 4.0 GPA.
   a. Dontay
   b. Cecilia
   c. Soma
   d. Jess

6. This student was involved in student government, took AP classes, and decided to stay close to home for college.
   a. Dontay
   b. Cecilia
   c. Soma
   d. Jess

7. This student is an athlete, took AVID and AP courses, and earned a scholarship to attend California State University Bakersfield.
   a. Dontay
   b. Cecilia
   c. Soma
   d. Jess

Directions: Short Answer- Answer the question in depth and detail in the space provided.

8. Describe three things you can do to prepare for college. Which of these ideas can you begin this month?

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**FINAL TEST**

*Estimated Test Time: 20 minutes*

**PURPOSE:**
- To test knowledge and comprehension of the in-class, reading and homework assignments.
- This is a post-test of the College Assumptions Test on pages 32-35.

**ANSWER KEY:**

50 Total Points Possible

Students earn 2 points for every correct answer, and an additional 2 points for every correct response to a false question. Student responses for false questions may vary.

The final question, number 16, is worth 2 points.

1. **T**
2. **T**
3. **F** - Reason: Many private schools offer scholarships or students can take loans.
4. **F** - Most colleges have payment plans; you pay per month, quarter, or semester.
5. **F** - Depending on income, students may only pay a fraction of the cost.
6. **F** - Deadlines are the final opportunity to submit applications.
7. **F** - Many factors are considered when getting into college, such as: test scores, extra curricular activities, volunteer time, and much more.
8. **T**
9. **F** - While colleges expect students to meet certain general admission requirements such 4 years of English and Math, demonstrating a specialized or focused interest in an area such as art, engineering, medicine, economics, or music can help a student stand out.
10. **T**
11. **F** - Most students receive some financial aid, not a full-ride.
12. **T**
13. **F** - School counselors may not know what you want to do. You must tell them and then they may be able to help you.
14. **T**
15. **F** - *First Generation* proves students’ parents don’t need to have attended college in order for them to get into a university.
16. Student responses will vary. Look for answers that list two new ideas the student may have gained. Each idea earns one point for a total of two points.
Directions: Now that you have studied *First Generation*, fill in this post-test on college assumptions.

For questions 1-15, if an answer is true, simply write T. If an answer is false, write F and on the lines below write the reason the answer is false. You do NOT need to write anything on the sentence lines if the answer is true; just mark T.

1. You can take the SATs more than once.

2. Many colleges require you to submit a written “Personal Statement”.

3. Private universities are only for the wealthy.

4. Colleges require you to pay the tuition costs all at once.
5. The fees listed on college websites and publications are the fees for all students.

6. College deadlines are flexible; if you discuss your situation with the college, they will allow late entries.

7. You have to have a 4.0 to get into a college or university.

8. Going to community college can help students gain access to a 4-year university if his/her high school GPA is low.

9. Colleges are just looking for well-rounded students who meet the general requirements; colleges are not looking for students with specialized interests.
10. If your family is considered low-income, you may see reductions in your tuition costs.

11. Most students earn a full-ride scholarship to major universities.

12. It is possible to get scholarships in areas other than athletics.

13. School counselors will always tell you what you need to know in order to get into schools.

14. Talking with someone who has gone to college can be helpful for students to learn about college life.
15. If your parents didn’t go to college, you won’t go to college.

Directions: Answer the final question.

What two new ideas did you learn about college and/or what it takes to get to college?