


ACTIVITIES TO INSPIRE YOUTH TO PURSUE POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

There are many ways that caregivers can encourage and inspire youth to plan for a postsecondary education. Use your knowledge of your youth's strengths and interests to guide your conversations and actions.

SUPPORT AND REWARD ACADEMIC EFFORTS AND ACTIONS.

Display awards or good grades to encourage youth's academic performance. Remember to praise grade improvements or positive changes in academic behaviors; these small acts can help encourage a growth mindset.



Great job
studying for your
test!

ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES THAT ENCOURAGE LEARNING AND FAMILY BONDING.

Engage in fun activities at home that encourage learning and help the youth feel a part of a support system. Some ideas include watching a documentary, reading a book, playing trivia, or enjoying an educational game together.

START EARLY!

Begin talking with youth early about college and other types of postsecondary education to encourage early goal setting.

SET HIGH EXPECTATIONS.

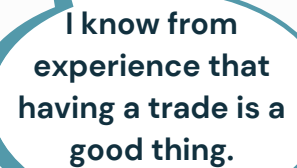
Express the expectation that the youth will graduate from high school and go on to postsecondary education by using such phrases as, "When you go to college..." instead of "If you go to college..." Send these messages early and often.

CREATE A COLLEGE-FRIENDLY HOME ENVIRONMENT

Hang college posters or pennants to help to create an environment that is college friendly.

EXPRESS A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION.

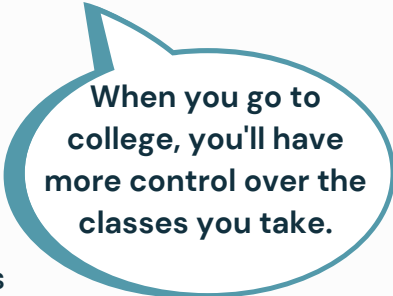
Be aware of micro-statements or thoughts that can actually be counterproductive. For example, "I never finished high school, but I learned a trade and can feed our family." A statement like this actually undermines the importance of higher education. Instead, more productive phrasing would be, "I know from my personal experience that having a trade is a good thing, but things are different today than they were when I was your age. To learn a trade now takes a postsecondary education."



I know from experience that having a trade is a good thing.

HELP YOUTH UNDERSTAND HOW HIGH SCHOOL IS DIFFERENT THAN COLLEGE.

Communicating how college is different from high school is particularly important for youth who didn't like high school. Explain for example, that in college, students can choose their classes based on their educational and career goals; college has flexible schedules and online classes; and there are opportunities for extracurricular activities and social fun. (See the handout, Big Differences Between High School and College.)



When you go to college, you'll have more control over the classes you take.

EXPLAIN THE NONACADEMIC BENEFITS OF ATTENDING COLLEGE.

Attending college has many benefits, including more career options, improved health outcomes, opportunities to develop critical thinking and communication skills, meeting new friends, and developing personal and professional connections. In addition, for some youth, money can be a motivator! Show them the income differences between people with a high school diploma and those with a college education.

TAKE A CAREER ASSESSMENT TOGETHER.

This can be a fun way to expose youth to the range of available career options and the education needed for most career paths. (See the handout, Online College & Career Readiness Tools.)

EXPOSE YOUTH TO A COLLEGE CAMPUS.

- Take youth to events and activities happening on college campuses, such as sporting events or film screenings.
- Encourage youth to attend college tours or college fairs. These can be great activities to do together and help the student get exposed and familiar with a college campus. Many colleges have official tours conducted by the office of admissions or self-guided tours.

If you aren't able to take a student on a tour, you can visit a college website together. Many now have interactive virtual tours and videos (see, for example, the virtual tours offered by UCLA and Howard University).

- Attend a foster youth celebration on a local college campus (these celebrations usually take place every year in May during Foster Youth Awareness Month).
- Connect foster youth to campus support programs, such as the Guardian Scholars program, a foster youth support program at many California colleges and universities. Many institutions of higher education have similar foster youth support programs under different names. Helping to facilitate a warm handoff to a staff member can make a youth feel more comfortable and connected to a college.

CONNECT YOUTH TO COLLEGE GRADUATES.

- Expose youth to role models, both in their communities and in the news or popular culture.
- Connect young people early and often with foster care alumni who are enrolled in college or who have completed postsecondary education to help them envision that college is possible.

EXAMPLES

On the next page are some examples of how a caregiver can support a youth's particular interests. These examples are not meant to be a script, but rather, inspiration.

Events and activities
happening on college
campuses:

Art shows
Plays
Musical performances
Cultural events
Sporting events
Film screenings
Lectures
Street fairs
Museum exhibits
Nature walks

Example 1: Maya the Artist

Maya loves all kinds of creative expression. She is a great painter and drawer and has an appreciation of drama and music. She is unsure of how to translate these interests into a future path.

Her caregiver could consider:

- Taking Maya to a college campus to attend an art show, musical performance, or play.
- Researching famous artists whom Maya admires and their career paths.
- Finding college professors or students in relevant fields and connecting Maya to them.
- Encouraging Maya to start putting together a portfolio of her artistic work, to be included with her college applications.
- Looking for relevant community service events for Maya to participate in, so she begins to immerse herself in her local artist community.

Example 2: Jose the Athlete

Jose is a strong soccer player but struggles in school. Soccer is his outlet and passion, but he is unsure of how to harness this talent.

His caregiver could consider:

- Making the connection between going to college and being involved in athletics very clear, showing him that higher education is a path not only to being an athlete, but also to working in the world of sports (for example, coaching, sports finance or law, stadium design).
- Connecting Jose to tutoring or remedial classes, so he is an empowered student and can balance participating in his school's soccer team with his academics.
- Researching and highlighting the careers of the athletes whom Jose admires and how higher education was a part of many of their paths. Also highlighting the paths of coaches and other professionals involved in sports.
- Watching documentaries together about famous athletes and others involved with sports.
- Taking Jose to college athletic games.
- Connecting Jose to community sports teams, a summer sports program, or service opportunities, for example, volunteering as a referee for kids' sports. Finding college professors or students in relevant fields and connecting Maya to them.