

# Middle School CHECKLIST

This checklist references sections found in the Postsecondary Education Planning Guide for Adults Supporting California's Foster Youth. Visit [jbay.org/resources/ed-planning-guide/](http://jbay.org/resources/ed-planning-guide/) to access the complete guide.

Middle school can be an exciting and scary time as students enter a new educational environment and explore new friendships while navigating peer pressure and physical changes. While youth may be hungry for more space and freedom, it is important to remain present and engaged in ways that create interactive opportunities with youth. This is a perfect time to empower youth to learn more about themselves and their interests through exploration, and prepare for coursework in high school and college.

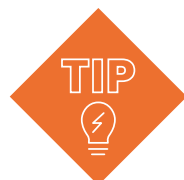
## EXPLORATION



Expose youth to opportunities that help them discover their interests, talents, and passions and develop new skills. Activities such as these can also help youth cultivate curiosity about potential career paths and higher education. Encourage and support youth to:

- ❑ **Attend events at local college campuses** such as cultural celebrations, performances, speaker series, sports, and more.

- ❑ **Attend visual and performing arts events** by visiting galleries, plays, dance performances, craft fairs, and city-sponsored cultural events.
- ❑ **Identify camps available during school breaks** that focus on nature; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM); robotics; coding; dance; theater; cooking; sports; or other hands-on experiences.
- ❑ **Participate in extracurricular activities** like school clubs, sports, student government, and volunteering.
- ❑ **Attend college tours** to expose them to life after high school and start building their college-knowledge.
- ❑ **Explore mentorship opportunities available in your community.** Mentorships can provide a safe and nurturing relationship through which youth can connect with individuals to learn about a wide range of topics including career options. Big Brothers Big Sisters is one option. Learn more at [bbbs.org](http://bbbs.org).



### KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

Additional information about the educational rights of foster youth can be found in the California Foster Youth Education Law Fact Sheets located at [cfyettf.org/publications.html](http://cfyettf.org/publications.html).



## ACADEMIC PREPARATION



Understanding learning styles and developing skills in time management, organization, and self-advocacy creates a strong foundation to successfully complete education and career goals.

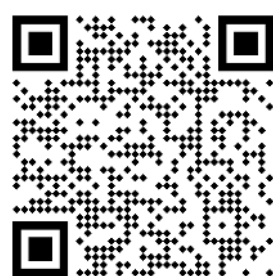
- ❑ **Practice time management skills.** Work with students to keep a calendar with important dates and deadlines. Set up a To-Do list for the week to identify activities that need to get done (homework, projects, chores, etc.) and those that the student wants to do (spend time with friends, play video games, watch a movie, etc.).
- ❑ **Work with students to complete learning style assessments** to determine approaches to studying. Understanding learning styles is an important part of helping students understand the types of study skills that will best benefit them. To learn more and complete assessments, visit [educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/index.shtml](https://educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/index.shtml).
- ❑ **Encourage self-advocacy.** Students may not always feel comfortable advocating for their needs or asking for help. Self-advocacy is an important skill for all students, in particular students with learning needs. One helpful resource is [imdetermined.org/youth/](https://imdetermined.org/youth/).
- ❑ **Learn about high school options in the area.** Connect with the school counselor. See Section 6 for more information.
- ❑ **Find academic enrichment programs** to help your student succeed in high school and encourage college attendance. See Section 10 for more information.

## COURSEWORK



- ❑ **Review the student's academic plan to ensure they are on track to be able to enroll in "a-g" courses once in high school.** Not sure what "a-g" courses are? Learn more in Section 6.
  - Taking Algebra 1 in middle school will place a student in an advanced math class upon entering high school and allow them to be better prepared for college.
  - Taking a foreign language as an elective in 8th grade may help the student advance one year of a foreign language for college eligibility requirements.
- ❑ **Regularly check the student's school work online.** Many schools use websites like Canvas or School Loop for parents and caregivers to track a student's grades, homework and important deadlines.
- ❑ **Request tutoring, as needed.** The school counselor, Foster Youth District Liaison, or County Office of Education Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) can be great resources. Learn more in Section 10.
- ❑ **If applicable, discuss special education services.** Explore if services, such as an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan, should be requested or if services need to be updated because the current services no longer meet the youth's needs. 504 Plans and IEPs provide accommodations for students with physical or mental health disabilities to succeed in school, however only certain classifications of disabilities are eligible for an IEP.

Scan here  
to watch



★  
**Student  
Spotlight:**  
Helping Youth  
Set and  
Reach Goals

Click  
[jbay.org/  
resources/  
student-  
spotlights/  
to watch.](https://jbay.org/resources/student-spotlights/to-watch)

# Planning for the Transition to High School

As youth transition from middle school into high school, decisions will be made that can impact a youth's entire education trajectory moving forward. This is a crucial time, and there are a number of considerations that adult supporters should be aware of.

## Understanding High School Options

In some communities, students may have many high school options, while in other communities there may only be one local public school. In addition to traditional public schools, there may be *magnet schools* with a particular focus such as science or the performing arts, *charter schools* that are publicly funded and tuition-free but managed privately, and *private schools*. Admissions requirements will vary, and so it is important to be aware of what high school options are available in your area. *Foster youth also have the right to transition to the same high school as their classmates. Visit the following sites to learn more.*

• **MAGNET SCHOOLS**  
[cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/mt/](https://cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/mt/)

• **CHARTER SCHOOLS**  
[cde.ca.gov/sp/ch/cefcharterschools.asp](https://cde.ca.gov/sp/ch/cefcharterschools.asp)

• **PRIVATE SCHOOLS**  
[cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ps/](https://cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ps/)

• **HOME SCHOOLING**  
[cde.ca.gov/sp/ps/homeschool.asp](https://cde.ca.gov/sp/ps/homeschool.asp)

## Understanding "a-g" Requirements

"a-g" courses refer to the college preparatory classes required for admission at the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) systems. Students who are unsure of their long-term plans should be encouraged to take "a-g" courses so that they have the option of attending a four-year university. Foster youth have the right to take or retake these courses.

**High school graduation requirements vary by school district and may differ from "a-g" requirements, so it is important to understand the difference.** For additional information, visit [calstate.edu/how-to-get-to-calstate](https://calstate.edu/how-to-get-to-calstate) or [ucop.edu/agguide](https://ucop.edu/agguide).

 High School Subject Area		UC and CSU Requirements for Freshman Admissions (15 Courses)
<b>A</b> History and Social Science		2 Years
<b>B</b> English		4 Years
<b>C</b> Math		3 years required, 4 recommended
<b>D</b> Science		2 years required, 3 recommended
<b>E</b> Foreign Language		2 years in the same language required, 3 years recommended
<b>F</b> Visual and Performing Arts		1 year
<b>G</b> Electives		1 year

## Preparing Youth for the Differences Between Middle School and High School

---

Educate your student about how high school is different from middle school and what to expect.

- **Grade Point Average (GPA) matters:** Each grade a student receives in high school will go onto their academic transcript and be calculated into an Overall Academic GPA, the average of *all* the grades that a student has secured throughout their high school coursework. Most four-year colleges and universities have minimum GPA requirements.
- **Extracurricular activities matter:** Participating in extracurricular activities outside of the classroom can help a student develop valuable skills and make them a more competitive candidate for college. This can include activities such as sports, clubs, leadership activities, academic enrichment programs, part-time jobs, and volunteering.
- **Students can begin earning college credit while in high school.** Work with the school counselor to learn more about dual enrollment course options. Courses can take place at the high school or local community college.
- **Students have options if they need to repeat courses or recover credits.** There are many programs to help students retake classes and stay on track for high school graduation. These options include summer school, adult school, continuation school, or remaining in high school for a fifth year. Students who choose to do a fifth year now have the option of either completing their district graduation requirement or the minimum state graduation requirements. Speak with a school counselor to see which option is best for the student.

TIP



Foster youth cannot be forced to attend a continuation school, adult school, or independent study program even if they are not on track for high school graduation, have failing grades, or have behavior problems, except under limited circumstances.

## Understanding High School Completion Options

---

It is important to understand the differences between the various pathways for completing high school as the path a student takes can impact their future opportunities.

- **High School Diploma:** A student who has met all the requirements for high school graduation and passed their classes receives a high school diploma. It is accepted for federal and state financial aid, admission into college\*, employment, and the military.
- **High School Certificate of Completion:** A student who has completed high school but did not meet all the requirements for graduation receives a high school certificate of completion. It is often provided to students with disabilities who are unable to complete the requirements for a high school diploma. It is not accepted for most federal and state financial aid, admission into college, or the military. It may be accepted by employers, but this can vary.
- **High School Equivalency (HSE) Certificate:** In California, a student who has passed the GED or HiSET test receives a High School Equivalency Certificate. Students must be 18 years old to take the exam, however some exceptions apply. It is accepted for federal and state financial aid, the military, and most employers. It is not accepted for admission into the CSUs, UCs, or most selective four-year private or out-of-state colleges.
- **Graduation Exemptions for Foster Youth:** Foster youth who change schools after their second year of high school and are behind in credits may be eligible to receive their high school diploma by completing the minimum state graduation requirements instead of any additional local graduation requirements set by their district. This option is sometimes referred to as an "AB 167/216 graduation." These students must remain in high school for four years. If a youth is eligible, the decision as to whether to graduate under this option is made by their Educational Rights Holder. Youth who graduate under this option will receive a high school diploma but will not fulfill the "a-g" courses required for admission at the UCs and CSUs. More information is available within Section 6 of the **California Foster Youth Education Law Fact Sheets**, which can be found at [cfyetc.org/publications.html](http://cfyetc.org/publications.html).

*\*Note: California Community Colleges do not require students to have a high school diploma or equivalent (GED/HiSET), however a diploma or equivalent is required in order to access most state and federal financial aid.*