

# High School Counselor and Advisor Toolkit



THE TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

# Our purpose is to strengthen Texas through higher education.

By making higher education accessible to a wide range of people, we can ensure Texas remains one of the world's most innovative, valuable educational systems. By bringing together data, policymakers, and institutions, we can inform sensible policies that make education beyond high school available to every person in our state, improving lives, communities, and our shared economy.



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## SECTION I

# Introducing My Texas Future

My Texas Future is a one-stop-shop for all Texans planning for and preparing for higher education. Texans can explore career interests, identify in-demand occupations in their region, and directly connect with institutions of higher education to achieve their goals. Launched by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) in 2022, this new digital platform provides resources tailored to the needs of middle school and high school students, college students, and working-age adults.

My Texas Future makes the career planning experience more personal, meaningful, and connected to students' goals and aspirations while rooting their decisions in practical information, like real-world earnings and regional job demand.

Central to the design of the platform is the belief that success for Texas means real opportunity with real outcomes for all Texans. Designing for the needs of diverse student populations will help build frameworks, systems, and products that serve our entire population and lead to better opportunities and outcomes for all Texans.

This toolkit has been developed as a resource to support counselors and advisors in integrating the My Texas Future platform in schools and classrooms at the high school level. The tools and resources are differentiated to support counselors and advisors serving all student populations, including specific groups such as students in the top 10 percent of their graduating class, traditionally underserved students, and those attending small and rural schools.

Each component of the toolkit contains relevant supporting activities, guidance, and reflection opportunities for counselors and advisors to consider their role in students' postsecondary readiness, preparation, and success.

**75% —**  
**of graduates**  
**nationally do not**  
**feel prepared to**  
**make college or**  
**career decisions.**



# Why Use My Texas Future

A product of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), My Texas Future is a free web portal that provides Texas students with a clear path to career opportunities through credential attainment. The portal facilitates students' educational journeys through comprehensive resources, actionable information, and data-driven recommendations.

My Texas Future is a holistic advising system that provides support to learners and supporters. It engages the whole learner by considering their emotional, economic, cognitive, social, and physical well-being. My Texas Future enables learners to develop the knowledge and skills to make informed academic and career decisions throughout their entire credential attainment journey.

The goal of My Texas Future is for learners to obtain credentials of value (e.g., degrees, certificates, and other credentials) that allow them to earn salaries above a minimum economic threshold within three years of completion.

## New Graduation Requirement

Texas Senate Bill 2314 (89th Legislature, Regular Session, 2025) establishes My Texas Future, a platform designed to help public high school students research and apply to Texas institutions of higher education through integration with ApplyTexas. Public schools and open-enrollment charter schools must annually notify students and parents/guardians about creating a My Texas Future profile. Beginning in the 2026-27 school year, the bill also requires students to opt in to sharing their records for Direct Admissions as a condition for graduation.

As a result of the new legislation, school districts are already preparing their students and families for college and career exploration using My Texas Future, and Direct Admissions is continuing to develop and expand each year. THECB and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) will be working together to collaborate on the opt-in process required for graduation, and required forms will be available to educators before the start of the 2026-2027 school year.

## SECTION II

# How to Use This Toolkit

To best support Texas counselors and advisors in implementing My Texas Future, this toolkit is organized by the four critical development experiences a student must have access to in order to succeed in their career readiness journey:

1. Career exploration
2. Planning for school
3. Paying for school
4. Creating family and caregiver partnerships

Each section will offer technical support on how to use My Texas Future and where to go on the website when guiding students through one or all four of these career readiness development experiences.

Counselors and advisors will also find activities that can be used with students to support them in their career and college readiness as well as familiarize them with the My Texas Future platform. The sections are sequential, each section building on what students identify as their career interests.

Each section will indicate the milestones that should be reached, the time each activity could take, material and preparation needs, and differentiated considerations for certain student groups.

Lastly, this toolkit should be used in conjunction with the [guidance offered by the Texas Education Agency](#).

## Resources

- [My Texas Future Overview Video](#) (Located in the My Texas Future - Secondary Module within the Designing College and Career Programming Texas OnCourse Academy course)
- [My Texas Future Learning Institute](#) (Texas OnCourse)
- [My Texas Future Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Contact My Texas Future](#)

## Setting up an Account and Profile

My Texas Future allows visitors to the site to engage and explore its features, without creating an account. To take advantage of all that My Texas Future has to offer, students can create an account and continuously update their learner profile, graduation plans, and their record of activities and achievements.

Learners will receive a customized experience based on whether they explore as a middle or high school student and will find information about exploring their college and career interests, succeeding in high school, and succeeding in college.

[Download the comparison chart](#) below to share the advantages of creating an account with students.

	GUEST ACCESS	ACCOUNT HOLDER ACCESS
TAKE THE CAREER INTERESTS QUIZ		
USE THE CAREER EXPLORER AND PROGRAM EXPLORER		
SAVE CAREER AND PROGRAM MATCHES		
SYNC ACCOUNT WITH APPLY TEXAS		
ACCESS DIRECT ADMISSIONS MATCHES		

TEXAS ON COURSE

## Single Sign On

Students can use the same login credentials for My Texas Future and ApplyTexas, which means one username and password works for both.

At this time, information in My Texas Future is shared with ApplyTexas, so students should enter and update their information in My Texas Future first before starting their ApplyTexas application.

## Creating an Account

To create an account, students will complete the form using their name, date of birth, email address, and a unique password, with the following password parameters:

- Password must be 14-50 characters long.
- Password must contain each of the following elements:
  - Lowercase characters (a-z)
  - Uppercase letters (A-Z); numbers (0-9)
  - One or more of the following symbols: @ # \$ % ^ & \* - \_ + = [ ] { } | \ : ' , ? / ` ~ “ ( ) ;

## Resources

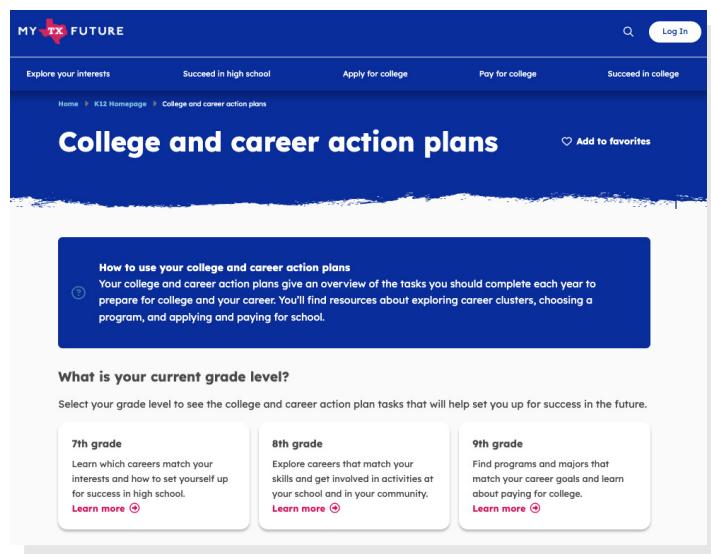
- [Creating an Account and Learner Profile](#) (Texas Oncourse PPT presentation)

## Using the College and Career Action Plans with Students

My Texas Future's [College and Career Action Plans](#) guide students through exploring career paths based on their skills and interests, aligning their goals with their high school courses, researching colleges and programs, and tracking progress toward graduation and beyond.

To support informed decision-making and ensure students stay on track for their college and career aspirations, educators can encourage students to review and update their action plans regularly.

For printable action plans, see Appendix.



The screenshot shows the 'College and career action plans' section of the My Texas Future website. The top navigation bar includes links for 'Explore your interests', 'Succeed in high school', 'Apply for college', 'Pay for college', and 'Succeed in college'. A search bar and a 'Log In' button are also present. The main content area features a large blue header with the text 'College and career action plans' and an 'Add to favorites' button. Below this, a box titled 'How to use your college and career action plans' provides an overview of the tasks students should complete each year. Another box titled 'What is your current grade level?' allows users to select their grade level to see specific tasks. Three grade level boxes are shown: '7th grade', '8th grade', and '9th grade', each with a 'Learn more' link.

## SECTION III

# Career Exploration Roadmap

Career exploration can be such an exciting part of a student's journey! It's also incredibly important because there are so many careers out there students may not even be aware of. Students cannot be what they cannot see.

## The 5 Stages of Career Exploration



The Career Exploration Roadmap is a framework designed to guide students through the various cycles of career development. This roadmap consists of five stages and helps school counselors and advisors provide effective guidance and locate resources at each stage of a student's career exploration process.

Below is an overview of each stage as well as some selected activities that support students in understanding each stage of the roadmap while increasing their familiarity with the My Texas Future website.



## Stage 1: Explore Interests

The first stage in the Career Exploration Roadmap is student reflection and assessment of what they enjoy and what their strengths are. In this section, students will explore their career interests by participating in a reflection exercise and taking the Interests and Skills quizzes.

Counselors and advisors should establish milestones and adjust activities according to context and knowledge of students that are being supported.

## Milestones for This Section

- Students will create a [My Texas Future](#) personal profile, including their interests, strengths, and values.
- Students will complete the Interests and Skills quizzes found on My Texas Future.
- Students interested in military service will receive ASVAB testing information.

## Activity: Exploring Interests and Skills

### Estimated Time

30-45 Minutes

### Essential Question

How can I explore careers that match my interests and skills?

### Materials Needed

- Interests and Strengths Graphic Organizer (Appendix)
- Computers or laptops to access [My Texas Future](#)
- Pens/pencils

### Preparation

- Watch an [overview of My Texas Future](#) provided by Texas OnCourse.
- Allow students time to create a [My Texas Future](#) account and complete their profile.
- Create a system to make sure students record their login information and store for easy access.

### Self-Reflection (5-10 Minutes)

Connecting what a student does in school to their career aspirations helps students enjoy and engage more in what they study, making success more likely. Allowing students space to reflect on what they enjoy inside and outside of class is a critical component in their career and college readiness.

Allow independent time for students to answer the questions in the Interests and Strengths Graphic Organizer.

## Interests and Skills Quizzes (5-10 Minutes)

Interests and skills assessments are a great way for high school students to understand how their personal attributes and strengths can impact their success.

Counselors and advisors can use these tools to help individuals make more informed decisions. Plus, students can take multiple career assessments throughout high school since their skills, attitudes, aptitudes, values, and interests often change over time.

Prior to taking the Interests or Skills quizzes, allow students to reference their Interest and Strengths Graphic Organizer. Share that the quizzes will provide one or more career clusters that students can explore. If time permits, it may be beneficial to share the 14 national career clusters provided by [Advance CTE](#) or list the [14 Texas approved career clusters](#) for students to reference.

1. Ask students to log into their My Texas Future profiles.
2. Direct students to hover over the Explore Your Interests tab.
3. Instruct them to click on Career Quizzes and then take the Interests and Skills quizzes.
4. Ask students to choose activities of interest or their current skills.
5. Remind students to select as many or as few options as they like.
6. Tell students they can receive personalized recommendations based on their answers.
7. Ask students to save their results in their profile.

## Conclusion: (5-10 minutes)

- Allow students to explore the career clusters that were recommended to them after completing their quizzes, and then debrief using the questions below.
  - What were your recommended career clusters?
  - Which careers match your interests the most? Which careers best match your skills?
  - Why would you be a good fit for that career?
  - What classes do you think you can take that will help prepare you for that career?
- Remind students that each career cluster links to more information where students can explore which careers are in each. They will also see a recommended list of top careers within each career cluster.

The screenshot shows the 'MY TX FUTURE' website interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Explore your interests', 'Succeed in high school', 'Apply for college', 'Pay for college', and 'Succeed in college'. A search bar and a 'Log In' button are also at the top. The main content area is divided into two sections: 'Interests quiz' and 'Skills Quiz'. The 'Interests quiz' section features a woman working at a desk with a laptop, with text explaining that it recommends career clusters based on interests. The 'Skills Quiz' section features a person working on a laptop, with text explaining that it helps discover careers matching current skills. Both sections have a 'Take the [quiz] quiz' button.

## Consideration for students interested in military service:

- Students can read more about military options and “favorite” the military option in their My Texas future profile, if interested.
- If your campus is hosting an ASVAB, share the specific test date and location with interested students. If not, refer them to the ASVAB website to learn more and contact a recruiter.

The screenshot shows the My Texas Future website with a dark blue header. The header includes the "MY TX FUTURE" logo, a search icon, and a "Log In" button. Below the header, there are five navigation links: "Explore your interests", "Succeed in high school", "Apply for college", "Pay for college", and "Succeed in college". The main content area has a light gray background. The title "Decide if military service is an option for you" is in bold black text. Below the title, a paragraph of text is followed by a list of questions. At the bottom of the section, a small note reads: "The more internal reflection you do while in high school, the better you'll feel about signing a binding contract."

**Decide if military service is an option for you**

Making a commitment to serve in the military is not one to take lightly. You may be interested in serving your country, but you need to understand what comes with that duty.

Consider the following questions to better understand why you want to join the military:

- Do you want to serve your country?
- Are you thinking of making the military a career, or are you wanting to join for four to five years prior to going to college?
- Do you want to learn a trade or get college benefits?
- Are you interested in travelling the world?

The more internal reflection you do while in high school, the better you'll feel about signing a binding contract.



## Stage 2: Explore Career Options

After students identify areas of interest, the next stage in the Career Exploration Roadmap is exploring career options. There are thousands of career opportunities, and during this stage students should review their career assessment results and identify careers that align with their strengths and interests. As students broaden their understanding of what careers are available and how they align to their interests, they can begin narrowing career choices by accounting for local demand and comparing pay and required education.

My Texas Future offers a [Career Explorer](#) that can compare hundreds of Texas-based careers. Students can filter careers based on criteria such as local demand, pay, required education, and related skills. They can also save their search preferences and bookmark careers that interest them. In the following section, an activity offers guidance on how to introduce the Career Explorer to students.

### Milestones for This Section

- Students will explore and compare careers.
- Students will add at least 5 or more careers to their My Texas Future profile.

## Activity: Career Explorer

### Estimated Time

25-30 Minutes

### Essential Question

How can I explore careers and find more information about them?

### Materials Needed

- My Texas Future Interests and Skills quizzes results
- [Career Explorer Activity Worksheet](#)
- Pens/pencils
- Paper

**MY TX FUTURE**

**Career Explorer Activity**

The Career Explorer in My Texas Future gives you an opportunity to explore thousands of career options. This Career Explorer activity will help you broaden your understanding of what careers are available and how they align to your interests!

**What were your recommended career clusters from your interests quiz?**

Do you want to work remotely or in person? Why?

Do you need flexible hours? Why?

What pay and benefits do you need?

How will you balance the pay scale you desire with what jobs are in demand?

What size of company do you want? Start-up? Large and established? Mid-sized?

What type of company culture?

Do you want certain responsibilities?

## Preparation

Ask students to access their quiz results.

## Activity Introduction (15 minutes)

Begin this lesson by sharing the demand and supply side of the job market and reminding students that a job's pay is just one thing to consider when exploring careers. Students should consider which careers align with their strengths and interests, the demand for various careers, and the estimated pay.

Career Demand	Career Supply
<p>Businesses, organizations, and employers need information to understand the market surrounding their work to effectively run their operations.</p> <p><b>For example:</b> Employers use this information to determine wages and benefits to assess the labor pool and to assess economic conditions for future planning.</p>	<p>People who supply their skills, talent, and labor need information to prepare for and locate desirable employment.</p> <p><b>For example:</b> Job seekers use this information to access jobs in demand, determine skills required, get information on projected growth or decline by occupation, and find potential employers.</p>

For more information on labor market information visit the [Texas Workforce Commission](#) or Texas' [Labor Market Information](#) websites.

After reviewing supply and demand of the job market, ask students to return to their Interests Quiz results and allow them to discuss what they hope to find during Career Exploration time.

Use the prompts on the [Career Explorer Activity Worksheet](#) to get them started.

## Career Explorer Tool (10-15 minutes)

- Ask students to log into their My Texas Future profiles.
- Ask students to hover over Explore your Interests and click [Career Explorer](#).
- Ask students to save their search preferences and career interests.

## Discussion (10 minutes)

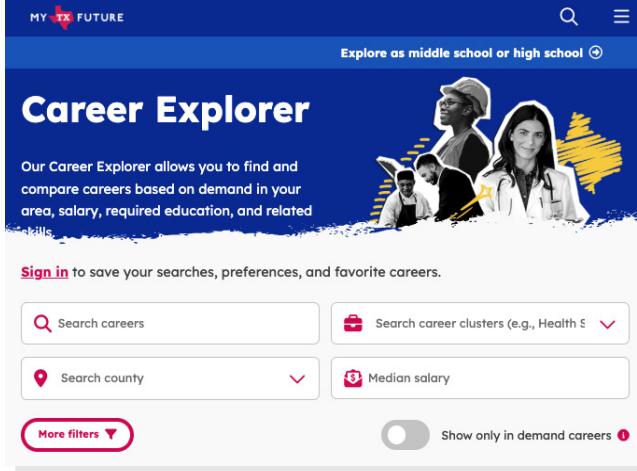
Now that students have identified a few careers of interest, ask students the following questions:

- What does your day-to-day career look like?
- How much does it pay?
- What skills, education, or certifications do you need?

## Conclusion (5 minutes)

Now that students have identified their personal strengths and areas of interest, it's time to explore specific careers further.

- Encourage students to begin thinking about volunteering and taking classes in their subject of interest.
- Students can find job shadowing or Work-Based Learning opportunities from the counseling office or from the Career Technology department.



The screenshot shows the MY TX FUTURE Career Explorer interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the 'MY TX FUTURE' logo, a search icon, and a menu icon. Below the navigation, a banner says 'Explore as middle school or high school' with a plus sign. The main title 'Career Explorer' is prominently displayed with a subtext: 'Our Career Explorer allows you to find and compare careers based on demand in your area, salary, required education, and related skills.' To the right of the text is a graphic featuring several diverse individuals in professional careers like medicine and technology. Below the title, there are search fields for 'Search careers' (with a magnifying glass icon), 'Search career clusters (e.g., Health S)' (with a briefcase icon), 'Search county' (with a location pin icon), and 'Median salary' (with a dollar sign icon). There are also buttons for 'More filters' and 'Show only in demand careers' (with a toggle switch). A 'Sign in' link is located above the search fields.



## Stage 3: Career Planning

Now that students have saved a list of careers in their profiles, introduce them to the tools available in My Texas Future to build their resumé. These tools provide step-by-step guidance and templates to help students highlight their skills, experiences, and accomplishments effectively.

### Milestones for This Section

- Students have a resume or LinkedIn profile.

## Activity: Building A Resume

### Estimated Time

20-30 Minutes

### Essential Questions

How can a resume help with college and career planning? What are the different parts of a resume?

### Materials Needed

- My Texas Future Career Explorer results
- Computer or laptop

### Activity Introduction (10 minutes)

Resumes aren't just for adults; high school students need them for college applications, summer jobs, and internships. A well-crafted high school resume highlights your achievements and how you spend your time. Creating a resume as a high school student is a crucial step toward future opportunities. It will be useful for job and internship applications, as well as college applications, emphasizing relevant coursework, extracurricular activities, and job experience.

Your resume should include some or all of the following sections. You can change what sections you include depending on what you're using the resume for.

- Education, including GPA
- Jobs
- Clubs and activities
- Achievements, awards, and/or honors
- Projects
- Additional skills
- Hobbies

The point of the resume is to show what you've accomplished. If you don't have something to show for awards or honors, it's okay not to include that section.

### Explaining your Skills (5-7 minutes)

Ask students to share what they believe are soft skills and hard skills.

#### Suggested answers:

Soft skills are skills that you cannot measure, such as:

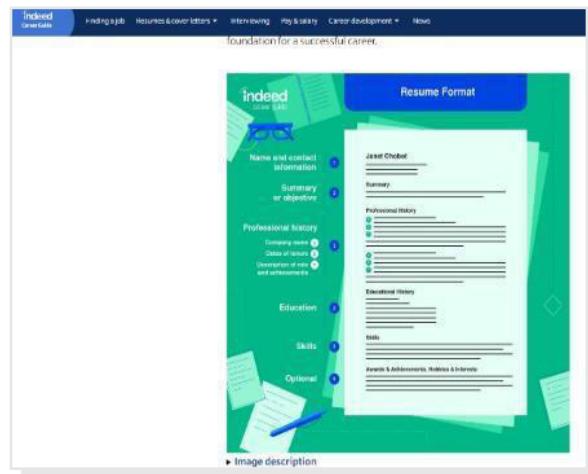
- Good listening
- Small talk
- Getting along with others

Hard skills are skills that you can measure, such as:

- Typing words per minute
- Ability to use programs such as Adobe Creative Suite or Java
- Fluency in multiple languages

### Build Your Resume (15-20 minutes)

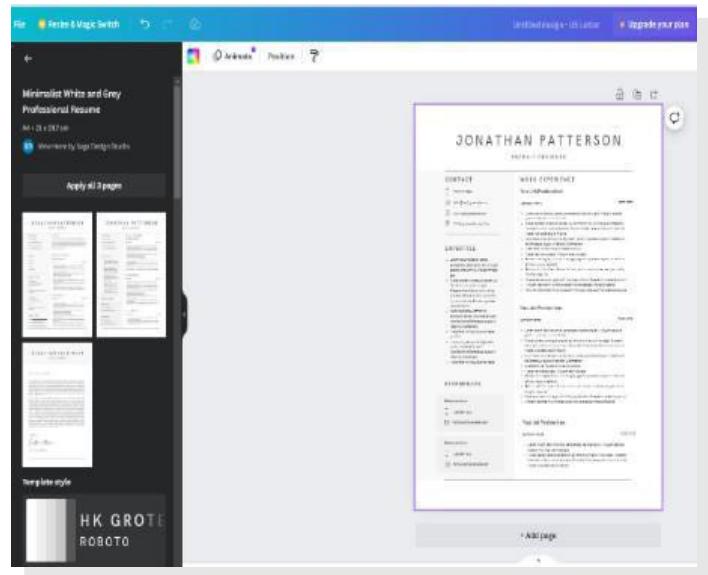
- Visit the [Update Your Resume](#) section of My Texas Future for an overview of resume types, sections to include, and other helpful tips.
- Have students watch the video [High School Resume: A Step-by-Step Guide from Indeed](#) and choose how they would like their resume to look.
- Allow students to view sample resumes:
  - [Sample Resumes for High School Students](#) (Indeed)
  - [Annotated Resume](#) (Texas Oncourse)



- Ask students to create a resume using the [Free Resume Builder from Canva](#). Additional templates can be found on the [Update Your Resume](#) section of My Texas Future.

### Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Ask students to share what they are going to include on their resume and what soft skills or hard skills they listed.
- Advise students to regularly update their My Texas Future profile with academic accomplishments and accolades to include in their [ApplyTexas](#) account for college applications.





## Stage 4: Academic Planning

The academic planning phase for students consists of encouraging students to take relevant classes and prepare for college entrance exams such as the SAT, ACT, or TSIA2. Encourage your students to explore career paths, as this can boost their motivation to complete coursework and make their education more engaging. Use the resources available on the My Texas Future platform to assist students in aligning their studies with their careers of interest.

Academic planning helps students see how the choices they make in high school—courses, grades, and exams—connect directly to their long-term career goals. Rather than only checking graduation requirements, students should think strategically: *Which courses will prepare me for the degree or training I'll need after high school?*

My Texas Future supports this process by showing how different careers connect to specific subject areas, helping students review admissions requirements, and highlighting the importance of GPA and college entrance exams. By aligning their coursework now, students build the foundation that makes the decision-making process in Stage 5 easier and more intentional.

### Resources

- [Advanced Academic Courses](#) (Texas OnCourse)
- [Sample Path to High School Graduation](#) (PDF)

### Milestones for This Section

- Students have identified which high school courses connect to their career interests.
- Students understand which academic areas they need to strengthen to prepare for postsecondary opportunities.
- Students have listed exams (SAT, ACT, TSIA2) needed for their goals.

## Activity: Connecting Courses to Careers

### Estimated Time

25-35 Minutes

### Essential Questions

- How do my high school courses and grades affect my future career and college

opportunities?

- What subjects are most important for the career I'm interested in?
- Which steps can I take now to make sure I'm academically ready for the next stage?

### Materials Needed

- My Texas Future Interests Quiz results
- [Academic Planning Worksheet](#)
- Computers or laptops with internet access
- High school transcript or course list

### Activity Introduction (5-7 minutes)

The classes you take in high school can open doors to your future college and career opportunities. Choosing courses with your career goals in mind helps you build the skills and knowledge you'll need after graduation. For example, students interested in health sciences may want to take advanced science classes, while those interested in business might choose accounting or marketing electives. Today, we'll use your career interests from My Texas Future to think about how your high school courses can prepare you for the future.

### Connecting Courses to Careers (10-15 minutes)

1. Have students review their top career interests from the My Texas Future Interests Quiz and read about setting educational goals in high school.
2. Distribute the Academic Planning Worksheet.
3. In Step 1, ask students to list their top career choices and the skills or knowledge needed for each.
4. In Step 2, ask students to identify current or upcoming high school courses that align with these careers (for example, AP Biology for pre-med, or Graphic Design for digital media).
5. Encourage students to think about required courses and electives, and how they build transferable skills.

### Reflection and Sharing (5 minutes)

- Ask students to reflect on the worksheet prompts in Step 3.
- Invite volunteers to share one course they identified and how it connects to their career goals.
- Emphasize the importance of updating their My Texas Future profile with academic progress and using this information later when considering college programs.

### Conclusion (3 minutes)

Remind students that academic planning is about more than just meeting graduation requirements; it's about setting themselves up for success in college and careers. By choosing

courses that align with their career interests, they are building a strong foundation for the decision-making process in the next stage.

It's also important to discuss [college entrance exams like the SAT and ACT](#). These exams measure knowledge and skills gained in core subjects, so the classes students take in high school directly prepare them for test success. Give students this [Entrance Exams Checklist](#) that contains information on how to register, prepare for exams, and what to do after testing.

## Additional Resource

[Comparing the SAT and ACT](#) (Texas OnCourse PDF)



## Stage 5: Decision Making

In the college decision-making process, it's crucial to consider factors like degree programs, financial aid, and campus locations. Use My Texas Future to guide students by comparing college programs. Encourage students to synchronize their My Texas Future account with ApplyTexas (using the same login credentials) when they are ready to apply. They can also talk to high school alumni for valuable insights.

### Milestones for This Section

- Students have a list of colleges they are considering.
- Students have created an [ApplyTexas](#) account.
- Decision making: Build your college list.

## Activity: Program Explorer

### Estimated Time

20-30 minutes

### Essential Question

How do I know if a college is the right fit for me?

### Materials Needed

- My Texas Future Interests Quiz results
- [Program Explorer Activity Worksheet](#)
- Resume
- Pen/pencils
- Notebook paper

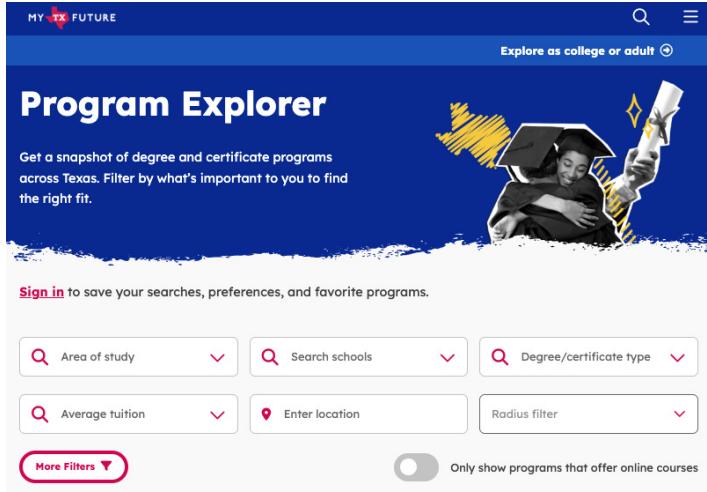
### Activity Introduction (5 minutes)

When thinking about college, staying focused on what's right for you is important—from degree programs to financial aid to campus locations. When you have a clearer picture of what you want in a college, you can research individual schools to see if they fit. Today, we will use the Program Explorer in My Texas Future to generate a list of colleges. Use the following questions in this [Program Explorer Activity](#) worksheet to consider which college should be added to your list.

MY TX FUTURE	
Program Explorer Activity	
The Program Explorer lets you search and sort results using certain filters to find the right fit. Whether you're exploring degrees, certificates, or training programs, this resource makes it easy to compare options at colleges and universities across Texas.	
Consider the following college guiding questions:	
Academic Programs	What majors and academic programs does the college offer? Are there any specific programs or departments known for excellence in my field of interest?
Admission Criteria	What are the admission requirements, including class rank/GPA, standardized test scores, and extracurricular activities? Are there any specific admission deadlines or requirements for the programs I'm interested in?
Financial Aid and Scholarship	What types of financial aid are available, including scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study programs? Are there any merit-based scholarships available, and what are the criteria for eligibility? What is the total cost of attendance, including tuition, fees, room, and board?
Location and Campus Facilities	Where is the college located, and what is the surrounding area like in terms of safety, amenities, and opportunities for recreation? What campus facilities are available, such as libraries, laboratories, fitness centers, and student support services?

## Program Explorer Tool (10-15 minutes)

- Consider grouping students by interests or strengths.
- Ask students to hover over the Apply for College tab and select Program Explorer.
- Ask students to only enter their desired career in the “search program” field and select which certificate or degree program they would like to pursue.
- A filtered list of colleges will begin to populate.
- Ask students to refer to the [Compare types of colleges](#) page when examining college search results.
- Ask students to select 2-3 schools and complete the [Program Explorer Activity](#) worksheet.
- Allow students to share their search results with their group.



## Conclusion: (5 mins)

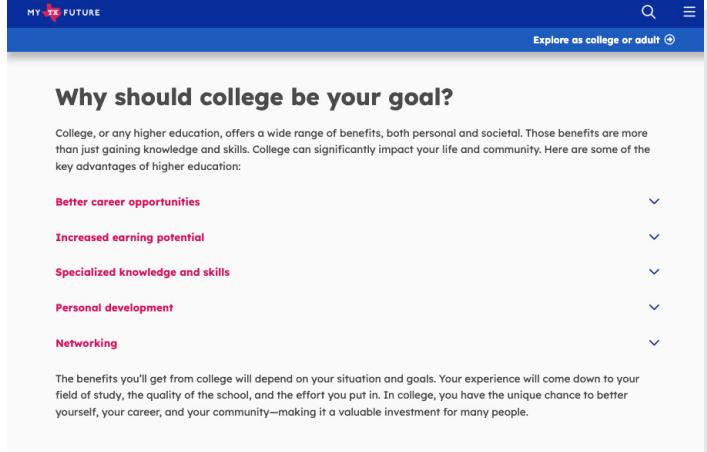
Ask students to share with the whole group what they found based on their filters, and what was most important to them when exploring programs. As a next step, students should create an [ApplyTexas](#) account. Encourage students to submit their college applications during [Free College Application Week](#) to save money on application fees.

# Apply For College

My Texas Future has everything students need to prepare for and apply to colleges. The Apply for College section covers building a college list, gathering what students will need to apply, and additional information about college applications.

## Know Why College Matters

This [page](#) highlights why attending college is important and outlines the benefits of obtaining a college degree and the various career opportunities available to graduates. Use this page to educate students on the value of a college education.



## Start College in High School

[This page](#) offers essential information to guide students in preparing for college and pursuing a degree. It includes an overview of dual credit, Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) credit options. Use this page to inform students about the various pathways available to earn college credit while still in high school.

This lesson will help high school students identify why attending college matters, emphasize the benefits, and illustrate the career opportunities associated with obtaining a college degree.

### Milestones for This Section

- Students can independently use My Texas Future to explore college programs.
- Students have a high understanding of the college level courses offered by their school.

## Activity: Understanding the Importance of College for High School Students

### Estimated Time

45-60 Minutes

### Essential Question

Why is college important? Which college-level courses can I take while in high school?

### Materials Needed

- Access to [My Texas Future](#)
- Career Exploration Roadmap
- Whiteboard and markers
- Pens and notebooks for students

### Activity Introduction (5 minutes)

- Welcome and brief overview of the session.
- Explain the objective: Understanding why college matters for high school students.

### Why College Matters (5 minutes)

- Present statistics on the benefits of college education (higher earning potential, lower unemployment rates, personal development).
- Discuss the societal and personal value of a college degree.
- Read about the [key advantages of higher education](#) on the My Texas Future website.

## Benefits of Going to College (10 minutes)

Detailed discussion on various benefits:

- **Economic Benefits:** Higher salaries, better job stability, and broader career opportunities.
- **Personal Growth:** Enhanced critical thinking skills, exposure to diverse ideas and cultures, and improved self-discipline.
- **Social Impact:** Better health outcomes, increased civic participation, and improved quality of life.

## Career Opportunities with a College Degree (10 minutes)

- Provide an overview of careers that typically require a college degree.
- Discuss fields with high demand for college graduates (STEM, healthcare, education, business).
- Highlight emerging industries and the importance of advanced education for future job markets.

## Pathways to College Credit (10 minutes)

- Introduce dual credit, Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs.
- Explain how these programs can help students earn college credit while still in high school, saving time and money.
- Provide examples of successful student pathways.

Resource: [Start College in High School](#) (My Texas Future)

## Explore Apply for College (15 minutes)

- Ask students to access the My Texas Future platform.
- Highlight how My Texas Future supports college planning through information on college programs, application processes, and financial aid.
- Encourage students to use the Direct Admissions tool to see which schools will accept them before they even apply (more info on the following pages).
- Encourage students to submit their college applications during [Free College Application Week](#) to save money on application fees (read more on the following pages).

## Conclusion and Takeaways (5 minutes)

- Summarize the main points based on your discussion with the students.
- Ask students to respond to one of the reflection questions from today's lesson:
  - What benefits do you believe you will gain from a college education?
  - How does the idea of college influence your current plans and decisions in high school?
  - What aspects of college life are you most looking forward to, and why?
  - How do you see a college degree affecting your family's future?
  - How will college help you contribute to your community and society?
  - See the follow-up activities below and decide which one would best support your students.

# Direct Admissions

[Direct Admissions](#) is a statewide initiative launched in Fall 2024 that allows eligible Texas students to receive automatic college admissions offers based on their academic achievement. Primary areas of impact include:

- **Access & Opportunity:** Direct Admissions expands pathways to higher education by guaranteeing college admission for qualifying students.
- **Clarity & Confidence:** Students receive clear admission offers without the stress of traditional application uncertainty.
- **My Texas Future as the Hub:** Students and families can use My Texas Future to explore college options, financial aid, and career pathways.

## How does Direct Admissions work?

The THECB works with colleges and universities in Texas to compile their admission criteria into My Texas Future where students receive an accurate personalized list of institutions that may offer them admission. Admission criteria is updated annually so students can be sure their list is accurate for the academic year they are applying for admission. Essentially, students are guided through the following steps:

1. **Eligibility:** Students sign in to My Texas Future, share their self-reported academic details like class rank, GPA, and test scores, and agree to share this information with participating schools.
2. **Notification:** Eligible students immediately see which universities will accept them based on those academic details.
3. **Student Action:** Students can review their offers and compare schools by location, cost, and programs using My Texas Future.
4. **Application:** My Texas Future and ApplyTexas have a single sign-on experience, so students can follow up with their admissions applications seamlessly.

## Additional Resources:

- [Direct Admissions Toolkit for Counselors and Advisors](#) (PDF)
- [Automatic College Admission](#)  
(Texas Education Agency)



# Free College Application Week

[Free College Application Week](#) is a statewide initiative that helps Texas residents apply to public colleges at no cost. Created by Senate Bill 2231 during the 89th Texas Legislative Session, all public colleges and universities in Texas are required to waive admission application fees for Texas residents who apply through [ApplyTexas](#) to undergraduate programs.

Alongside [My Texas Future](#), [ApplyTexas](#), and the [Direct Admissions program](#), Free College Application Week provides one more tool to help students streamline their college search and make achieving their higher education goals more affordable.

## When is it?

For the first year, Free College Application Week is October 13-19, 2025. Every year after, it will be the second full week of October (Monday-Sunday). Applications must be submitted through [ApplyTexas](#) by 11:59 p.m. CST on the last day of Free College Application Week to qualify. Applications that are started but not submitted will not be eligible.

## Who can participate?

All Texas residents applying for undergraduate admission at Texas public institutions through [ApplyTexas](#) may participate.

This includes first-time college students and transfer students. For details on residency status, see the [Texas Residency Guidelines](#).

## Additional Resources

- [Free College Application Week FAQs](#)
- [Adopted Rules Title 19](#)
- [Ways to Share with Higher Ed Institutions](#)
- [Ways to Share with K-12 Students and Families](#)

## Pay for College

The [Pay for College](#) section provides students with information on tuition and credit assistance, scholarship opportunities, and saving for college.

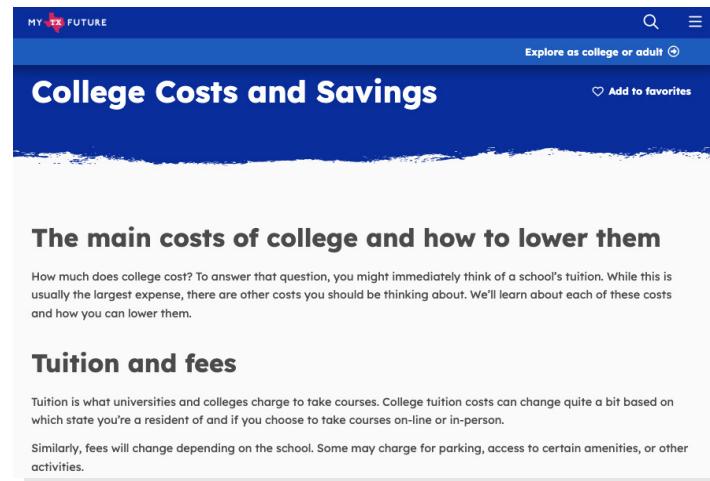


# College Costs and Savings

## College Costs and Savings

This page provides students with valuable information on reducing tuition costs and offers tips on financial aid. It also covers the costs of room and board, books, and supplies. Additionally, it directs students to use the [Program Explorer](#) to filter Texas schools by cost, helping them find the right fit for their budget.

Once a school is selected, students can use the [THECB's Net Price Calculator](#) to get a personalized estimate.



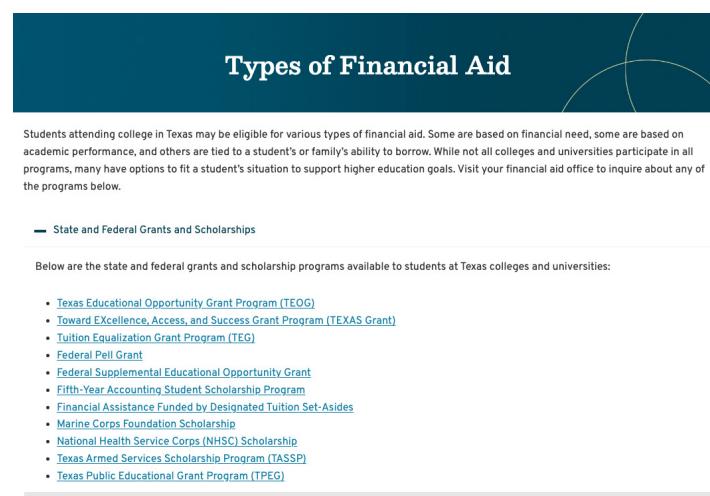
The screenshot shows the 'College Costs and Savings' page on the My TX Future website. The page has a blue header with the title 'College Costs and Savings' and a 'Add to favorites' button. Below the header, a section titled 'The main costs of college and how to lower them' is visible, along with text about tuition and fees.

## Compare Types of Aid

This page provides students with comprehensive information on various financing options, including grants and scholarships. It explains the differences between federal and state loans and exemptions and waivers. Additionally, this page offers an overview of other financial aid programs in Texas, such as those available to military families.

## Additional Federal and State Assistance

This page lists state and federal grants and scholarship programs that may be available to students attending college in Texas. Some are based on financial need, some are based on academic performance, and others are tied to a student's or family's ability to borrow. While not all colleges and universities participate in all programs, many have options to fit a student's situation to support higher education goals. Visit your financial aid office to inquire about any of the programs on this page.



The screenshot shows the 'Types of Financial Aid' page on the My TX Future website. The page has a dark blue header with the title 'Types of Financial Aid'. Below the header, a section explains the types of financial aid available to students attending college in Texas. A list of programs is provided, including TEOG, TEXAS Grant, TEG, Federal Pell Grant, FSEOG, FAS, NSC Scholarship, TASSP, and TPEG.

## Students in the Top 10%

The [Top 10% Rule](#) is for Texas high school students aspiring to attend college in-state. It guarantees students graduating in the top 10% of their Texas high school to be automatically admitted to all public universities in the state. It is important to note that while this rule ensures admission, students must apply separately for financial aid through FAFSA or TASFA. Additionally, some universities, especially selective colleges such as UT Austin, might have stricter criteria (e.g., top 5%). Others may extend automatic admission to a broader range (top 25% or even 50%).

## Financial Aid Graduation Requirements

The State Board of Education requires each student do one of the following in order to graduate:

- Complete and submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA);
- Complete and submit a Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA); or
- Submit a signed opt-out form.

[Learn more about Financial Aid Graduation Requirements on TEA's website.](#)

Below are supplemental resources to share with students:

- [Uniform Admissions Policy](#) (THECB)
- [University of Texas Admissions](#)
- [Related Readings and Articles](#)
- [FAFSA vs TASFA](#): Direct students to the “[FAFSA vs TASFA](#)” related reading for detailed information on the differences between these two financial aid applications
- [Financial Aid for Military Families](#): Have military families explore the specific financial aid options available by clicking on the related reading for military families

## Differentiated Consideration

Below are resources to support the different needs of various groups of students:

- Texas offers various programs that exempt or waive tuition, fees, and other expenses related to attending public institutions of higher education. Programs offered can be mandatory which require participation while others are optional. For more information on waivers, visit [Exemptions and Waivers](#).
- Over 25 public universities in Texas offer free tuition based on family income. For more information view [Texas 4-year Public Colleges Offering Free Tuition](#).

## SECTION IV

# Engaging Families and Caregivers

It's important to build strong partnerships with families and caregivers when planning for postsecondary education and career pathways. Consider visiting the [Tomorrow Ready Texas website](#) to view action plans focused on college planning, financial wellness, jobs and careers, life skills, and military readiness that support parents, families, and caregivers in helping their students reach their goals.

Use these strategies to effectively engage families and caregivers in using My Texas Future for supporting students' career and educational goals.

## Workshops and Webinars

- Host parent and caregiver webinar sessions to demonstrate My Texas Future tools for career exploration and post-secondary planning.
- Include presentation slides, handouts, or parent/caregiver guides.

## Material Distribution

- Create pamphlets or flyers explaining My Texas Future features to share at back-to-school meetings, meet the teacher night, or PGP meetings.
- Share with parents and caregivers their student has created a My Texas Future account and ask parents/caregivers to request from their student login credentials for My Texas Future.
- Consider using the sample communication template in the Appendix to email parents and caregivers about My Texas Future or include it in your counseling newsletters.
- Establish and maintain a dedicated webpage for My Texas Future on the counseling webpage.
- Include links to My Texas Future resources, updates, and instructions for parents and caregivers to access their students' accounts.

## Related Readings and Articles

The [Texas Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide](#) provides educators with useful information and guidance in creating a positive education experience for students in foster care. The guide aims to familiarize educators with the complexities of the foster care system and the relevant laws and policies that influence the educational experience of students in foster care. The resource creates a centralized location for foster care and education information, while increasing awareness and promoting improved cross-system practices and partnerships that benefit students in the Texas foster care system.

# Appendix

## Follow-Up Activities to Consider

- Hold office hours for students to explore My Texas Future and the Career Exploration Roadmap in detail.
- Create a resource packet for students, including testimonials, statistics, and information about dual credit, AP, and IB programs.
- Conduct a college planning session with students and parents to discuss the importance of college and the steps to get there.

## Texas OnCourse Academy: My Texas Future Learning Module

The Texas OnCourse Academy's [My Texas Future module](#) provides educators with background information, screenshots of the website, and helpful resources, such as PowerPoints and one-pagers that can be used in advising sessions with students and parents.

## Resources

- [My Texas Future Learning Institute Sessions](#)
- [Texas OnCourse Website](#)

## Sample Communication Template for Parents & Caregivers

As part of the school counseling team's commitment to supporting your student's educational and career journey at [\(insert school name\)](#), we are excited to announce our school will use My Texas Future. This platform offers valuable tools for career exploration, educational planning, and preparing for future opportunities.

My Texas Future provides access to:

- Career assessments and exploration tools
- Guidance on career pathways and college planning
- Information on financial aid and scholarships for all families
- Resources for developing essential life skills and job readiness

We believe your involvement in using My Texas Future can greatly benefit your student's decision-making process as they prepare for their future after high school.

Please take a moment to visit the My Texas Future website at <https://www.mytexasfuture.org/> to explore these resources.

Thank you for your continued support in helping our students achieve their academic and career goals.

# Interests and Strengths Graphic Organizer

**Directions:** Read and answer the following questions and share your responses.

<b>Name:</b> _____ <b>Date:</b> _____	
<b>What are your favorite classes?</b>	<b>What clubs are you currently involved in?</b>
<b>What are your favorite things to do after school?</b>	<b>What are some of your skills or abilities that you are particularly proud of?</b>  Or ask the questions below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In what areas do you excel or feel most confident?</li><li>• What tasks or activities come easily to you?</li></ul>

# College and Career Action Plans

## My Texas Future: 7th Grade Action Plan

Learn which careers match your interests and how to set yourself up for success in high school.

### Fall

**Fall is the perfect time to discover how your interests relate to a career. Getting involved in activities and clubs at school can help you explore those interests further.**

**Discover your interests** – Take a quiz to help you find out what interests you and how those interests relate to a career cluster.

**Get involved** – Build skills in and outside the classroom by participating in activities and clubs.

**Learn how to pay for college** – Research financial aid, scholarships, loans, and other ways to pay for college.

### Spring

**In the spring, start tracking your activities and accomplishments by building your resume. Your counselor can help you build a plan and find classes that fit your interests to set you up for success in the future.**

**Discover new careers** – Use online tools to learn about different careers. Talk to your friends and family about what jobs they have. Play the MiddleGalaxy Career game.

**Build your resume** – Create a profile, keep it updated with activities and extracurriculars. Track your accomplishments over time.

**Meet with your counselor** – Ask your counselor about earning college credit in middle school. Discover how to earn college credit.

### Summer

**Even though school's out for the year, you can still make progress by finding an endorsement that fits your interests and goals.**

**Choose a high school endorsement** – Learn about your endorsement options and choose one that matches your interests and goals.

# My Texas Future: 8th Grade Action Plan

Explore careers that match your skills and get involved in activities at your school and in your community.

## Fall

**As you come back from summer break, learn about career clusters and see what college programs match your career goals.**

**Connect your interests with a career cluster** – Take, or re-take, a quick quiz to see how your interests match career clusters and if they've changed since last year.

**Discover college programs** – Explore college programs related to your interests and goals. Build a list of your favorites.

**Get involved** – Build skills in and out of the classroom by participating in activities and clubs.

## Spring

**In the spring, start tracking your activities and accomplishments by building a resume. Learn about high school endorsements and what classes to take to set yourself up for success.**

**Understand graduation requirements** – Learn about the Texas high school graduation options. See how these options and requirements impact your college and career plans.

**Build your resume** – Keep a record of all the cool stuff you do and things you achieve. Create an account to track your activities in your profile.

**Plan your high school classes** – Choose an endorsement that matches your interests and goals and make a plan for classes to take.

## Summer

**Over the summer, prepare for high school and beyond by taking practice exams, exploring military careers, and learning about ways to save for college.**

**Explore military careers** – Discover what the military has to offer. Consider military options.

**Take practice exams** – Take practice exams like the PSAT 8/9 or the PreACT. They will prepare you for the college entrance exams in high school.

**Explore ways to pay for college** – Learn about ways to pay for college like savings, scholarships, grants, and loans.

# My Texas Future: 9th Grade Action Plan

Find programs and majors that match your career goals and learn about paying for college.

## Fall

**The fall is a good time to create a plan to take classes that will set you up for success in high school and college.**

**Discover new careers** – Use the Career Explorer to find careers that match your interests and goals.

**Learn why GPA matters** – Find out how your GPA and class rank can help you get accepted to Texas colleges.

**Take advanced classes** – Taking advanced classes now will help you get ahead later. AP, Dual Credit and other advanced classes will prepare you for college, and help you stand out when you apply.

## Spring

**As you start your second semester, begin to learn about colleges and programs. Also, find out how you can pay for these programs using financial aid.**

**Discover colleges** – It's never too early to attend college fairs or visit schools. Learning what's out there will help you discover what you like.

**Build your resume** – Get involved in activities and clubs at school. Create an account to track these accomplishments in your profile.

## Summer

**Make your summer count by building skills you'll need in college and your career.**

**Make your summer count** – Take advantage of summer. Try volunteering, a summer job, or learning something new.

**Talk to your family about college** – Make sure your family knows about the options available to pay for college.

# My Texas Future: 10th Grade Action Plan

Learn about the college application process and continue to build your resume.

## Fall

**Start the year off by preparing to apply to college with practice entrance exams and building your college readiness skills.**

**Build your resume** – Add your activities and accomplishments to your profile and start building your resume.

**Take advanced classes** – Taking advanced classes now will help you get ahead later. AP, Dual Credit and other advanced classes will prepare you for college, and help you stand out when you apply.

**Take practice exams** – Exams like the PSAT and PreACT will help prep you for tests like the SAT and ACT later in high school.

## Spring

**In the spring, retake career quizzes and explore careers to build a short list of careers you like. Use these as a starting point for exploring college programs.**

**Retake interest and skills quizzes** – Your interests and skills will change over time. Keep retaking quizzes to learn about new careers you'd enjoy or excel in.

**Talk to college reps** – Attend college fairs and tours, and talk to admission reps while you're there. Building a list of schools will help you.

**Discover new careers** – Uncover careers that are new-to-you and match your interests and goals.

## Summer

**During your summer break focus on building a list of colleges that you want to apply to and continue to build your resume by staying involved in activities.**

**Make summer count** – Learn something new and build your skills through jobs, internships, clubs and activities.

**Learn about free money for college** – Explore financial aid options and build a plan to pay for college.

# My Texas Future: 11th Grade Action Plan

Understand college and military programs and finalize the list of schools you want to apply to.

## Fall

**To start the year off, prepare for applying to college by narrowing down your college list and taking practice exams.**

**Compare college majors** – Use the Program Explorer to find college programs that connect to your career goals.

**Build your college list** – Work with your counselor and family to build a list of colleges you want to apply to.

**Take the PSAT** – Register for practice exams like the PSAT/NMSQT to prepare for college and gain access to scholarship opportunities.

**Step into leadership roles** – Take leadership roles in clubs and community service and update your resume to track accomplishments.

## Spring

**As you move into the spring semester, prepare materials for your college applications. This is also a great time to build a plan to pay for college costs using financial aid and scholarships.**

**Update your resume** – Use your list of activities and achievements and update your resume.

**Take entrance exams** – Register for the SAT, ACT, TSIA2, and SAT subject tests. Check requirements for schools on your list to see which scores you need to send.

**Prepare your college application materials** – Start to draft your college application essays. If needed, request letters of recommendation from teachers.

**See where you're accepted before applying** – Get a list of college acceptances before you start your college application process.

**Prepare to apply for financial aid** – Discover how to apply for financial aid in your senior year; build a budget that includes all college costs and estimates financial aid.

## Summer

**Make the most of your time over the summer by preparing to apply to college your senior year. Retake exams as needed, apply for financial aid, and gather application materials.**

**Apply for scholarships** – Supplement the financial aid you receive with scholarships.

**Prepare for college applications** – Gather the materials and information you'll need to apply to college. Narrow down your college list.

**Prepare for financial aid applications** – Talk to your parents about applying for financial aid. Make sure they know what financial documents you'll need.

# My Texas Future: 12th Grade Action Plan

Submit your college applications and create a plan for how you will pay for college.

## Fall

**As you start your senior year of high school, gather all the materials you'll need and submit your college applications. Apply for financial aid and scholarships to help pay for your degree.**

**See where you're accepted before applying** – Get a list of college acceptances before you start your college application.

**Retake entrance exams** – Register and retake the SAT or ACT if needed. Send a copy of your scores to the schools you're applying to.

**Match your career goals to a major** – Use the Career Explorer to view careers and find related programs that match your goals.

**Complete college applications** – Submit applications to schools on your college list. Be sure to have your test scores, transcripts, and resume ready.

**Complete financial aid applications** – Review types of financial aid and submit your federal & state financial aid applications.

**Apply for scholarships** – Applying for scholarships can also help you pay for college.

## Spring

**In the spring, check your email often to make sure you submit any extra materials for your applications. Start to build a plan to pay for college costs using financial aid and scholarships.**

**Review and compare financial aid offers** – Use online tools to compare offers; consider housing and other college costs to see which offer is right for your budget.

**Plan for college cost** – Create a plan to cover the cost of college including tuition, housing, books, and more.

**Develop skills** – Prepare for entry-level jobs by building soft skills like time management, teamwork, and organization.

**Understand student loans** – Learn about types of student loans and complete entrance loan counseling requirement.

## Summer

**Before you start college in the fall, build the skills you'll need through internships and jobs. Meet with an advisor to make sure you met all requirements to enroll in college.**

**Prepare for college** – Understand what you need to enroll and start school. Meet with an advisor to make sure you met all requirements.

**Explore college life** – Learn how to navigate college life and make the most out of your college experience.

**Apply to a job or internship** – Find internships and jobs to help you build skills that can set you up for success in college and the future.

# College and Career Readiness Vocabulary Words

The college and career readiness curriculum provides numerous vocabulary words educators can share with students. The curriculum also includes links to Quizlet resources that offer additional vocabulary practice. Here are a few examples of vocabulary words that are important for college and career readiness educators can introduce to their students:

## College Readiness

The ability to succeed in first-year college courses without needing extra help.

## Career Readiness

The skills and knowledge needed to do well in an entry-level job in your chosen career field.

## Growth Mindset

The belief that you can improve your abilities through effort and learning from mistakes.

## Self-reflection

The act of thinking about your own actions, progress, and thoughts to understand yourself better.

## Intrapersonal Skills

The skills you use to understand and manage yourself.

## Interpersonal Skills

The skills you use to communicate and interact effectively with others.

## Career Clusters

Groups of jobs and industries that share similar knowledge and skills.

## Career Pathways

A series of education and training programs that help you advance in a specific career.

## Endorsements

Areas of focused study in high school that give you deeper knowledge and skills for a specific career field.

## Median Salary

The middle salary for a job. Half earn more, half earn less.

## Projected Growth

How much a job is expected to grow in the future. More growth = more job openings.

## In-Demand Careers

Jobs that employers are actively looking to fill right now. College-level work and potentially earn college credit.

## Direct Admissions

This simplifies college planning for 12th graders by providing a personalized, annually updated list of Texas colleges where they are likely to be admitted, while still allowing applications to other schools through holistic review.

## Program

Structured degree or certificate pathway (associate, bachelor's, technical certificate, etc.) with requirements and outcomes.

## Major

Specific field of study you choose within a program.

These vocabulary words provide a foundation for students to understand and navigate the complexities of college and career planning. By introducing and reinforcing these terms, educators can empower students to make informed decisions about their future pathways.

Educators can also share these resources through My Texas Future and during Direct Admissions for K-12, ensuring students have the language and tools to fully engage with college exploration, admissions, and planning opportunities.

## Academic Planning Worksheet

Use this worksheet to connect your career interests to the courses you take in high school. By planning ahead, you can choose classes that help you build the skills and knowledge needed for your future college and career goals.



### Step 1: Career Interests

List up to three careers you are interested in exploring further and the skills or knowledge areas that are important for success.

<b>Career 1</b>	
<b>Why this career interests me</b>	
<b>Skills and Knowledge Needed</b>	

<b>Career 2</b>	
<b>Why this career interests me</b>	
<b>Skills and Knowledge Needed</b>	



<b>Career 3</b>	
<b>Why this career interests me</b>	
<b>Skills and Knowledge Needed</b>	



## Step 2: Course Alignment

Identify which required or elective courses will help you build the skills and knowledge you listed in the previous step.

Career	Course(s) to take	How This Course Helps



## Step 3: Reflection

**What courses are you currently taking that supports your career goals?**

**What additional electives or advanced courses should you consider adding to your schedule that will further support your career goal?**

**How will these courses prepare you for college programs related to your career interests?**

**TEXAS ON COURSE**