

Middle 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.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I: Introducing My Texas Future	04
Why Use My Texas Future	05
Section II: How to Use This Toolkit	06
Setting up an Account and Profile	06
Section III: Career Exploration Roadmap	09
Stage 1: Explore Interests	09
Activity: Exploring Interests and Skills	10
Stage 2: Explore Career Options	12
Activity: Career Explorer	12
Stage 3: Career Planning	15
College and Career Action Plans	15
Activity: Discover New Careers	16
Other Opportunities for Career Exploration	17
Stage 4: Academic Planning	18
Activity: Start College In High School	18
Activity: Starting a Plan	20
Stage 5: Decision Making	22
Activity: Endorsements and Career Paths	22
Activity: Introduction to GPA Using My Texas Future	24
Activity: Build Your College List Using My Texas Future	25
Activity: Senior Insight	26
Follow-Up Activities to Consider	28
Section IV: Apply for College	29
Activity: Understanding the Importance of College	29
Section V: Engaging Families & Caregivers	33
Appendix	35
Texas OnCourse Academy: My Texas Future Learning Module	35
Sample Communication Template for Parents and Caregivers	35
7th and 8th Grade Action Plans	37

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 explore related majors at Texas colleges 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. Students must be 13 years or older to use the platform.

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 middle 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.

My Texas Future is also an equitable advising system that actively prioritizes support for Texans with disproportionate barriers to education.

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 emphasizes the importance of career exploration during 7th and 8th grade.

Starting in 7th grade, each student should create an account and use it at least three times a year. Once in high school, they can expect to dive deeper into planning for post-secondary success, ensuring they explore diverse opportunities and prepare effectively for their educational and career journeys ahead.

Middle school counselors will also find activities and checklists for 7th and 8th graders that will support career exploration 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 identify 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.

MTF COMPARISON CHART		
	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 ONCOURSE

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)

SECTION III

Career Exploration Roadmap

Career exploration can be an exciting part of a middle school 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. Here in Texas, students are required to start exploring careers in middle school.

The 5 Stages of Career Exploration



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

Below is an overview of each stage, checklists for 7th and 8th graders, and activities that support students in understanding each stage of the roadmap while ensuring they become familiar 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 where their strengths are. In this section, middle school students will receive support in exploring their career interests by participating in a reflection exercise and taking the Interests and Skills quizzes.

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.

Activity: Exploring Interests and Skills

Estimated Time

45-60 Minutes

Essential Question

How can I explore my skills and interests and discover related careers?

Materials Needed

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

Preparation

- 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 (10-15 Minutes)

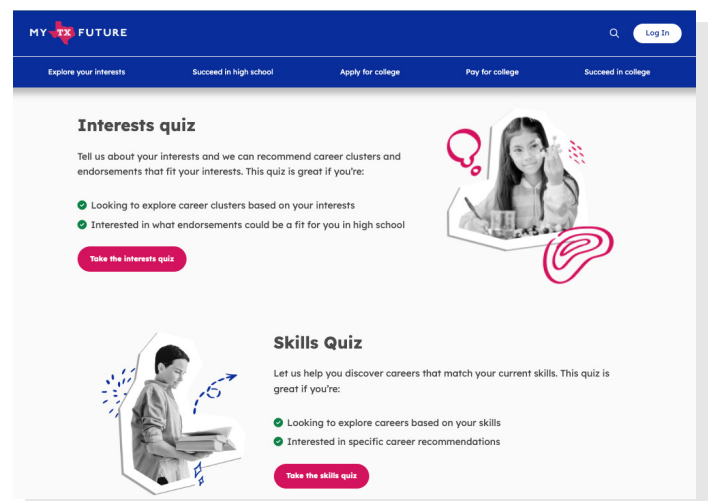
Connecting what a student does in school to their career aspirations helps students enjoy and engage more in what they study, making success more likely. Allowing students space to reflect on what they enjoy inside and outside of class is a critical component in their career and college readiness.

Allow independent time for students to answer the questions in the Interests and Strengths Graphic Organizer and provide time for students to share their responses with a partner or the whole group.

Interests and Skills Quizzes (20-30 Minutes)

Career and skill assessments are a great way for middle 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 middle and 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 activities as they like.
6. Tell students they can receive personalized recommendations based on their answers.
7. Tell students their quiz results will automatically save to their profiles.
8. Ask students to “favorite” careers they like the most.

Conclusion: (5-10 minutes)

- What did you learn today?
- 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?



Stage 2: Explore Career Options

After students identify areas of interest, guide them to use Milestones for This Section's [Career Explorer](#) to 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 will be provided to offer guidance on how to introduce the career explorer to students.

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 understand different career clusters.

Activity: Career Explorer

Estimated Time

20-30 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?

What's important to you?

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

- Allow students a few minutes to review their Interests and Skills quizzes results.
- Ask students to quickly discuss what they hope to find during their exploration time.
- Give students time to define what they want in a job.

Activity Introduction (15 minutes)

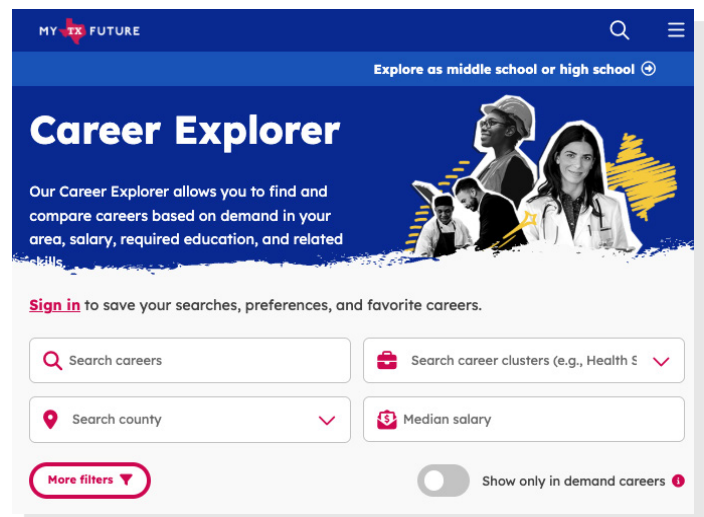
Share with students that it's important to consider jobs that match their strengths and interests as they start thinking about their future. This activity encourages students to think critically about what they want in a career and helps them understand how their interests and strengths can guide them toward a fulfilling job.

Here are a few prompts to get them started:

- Do you prefer working alone or with a group of people? Why?
- Would you like a job that involves being indoors or outdoors? Explain your preference.
- What kind of place do you think you'd like to work in the most (e.g., a quiet office, busy lab or working outside)?
- Would you rather have a job that allows you to travel a lot, or one that keeps you close to home?
- How do you want your job to make a difference in the world or your community?

Career Explorer Tool (10-15 minutes)

- Ask students to log into their My Texas Future profiles.
- Ask students to hover over the Explore your Interests option in the top menu, and then click [Career Explorer](#).
- Ask students to search two or three careers identified in the quizzes activity and use the filters to refine their search results.
- Guide students to “favorite” the careers they are most interested in and explain this information will be available on their profile under “favorites.”



Discussion (10 minutes)

Now that students have identified a few careers of interest, ask students as a whole group, or in small groups, to discuss 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 explored areas of interest and searched for possible careers, it's time to explore specific careers further.



Stage 3: Career Planning

Beginning in the 7th grade, students can explore careers aligned with their interests and prepare for 8th grade. My Texas Future supports students in understanding the connection between their interests and potential careers. . When used with [MiddleGalaxy](#), My Texas Future for This Section becomes a powerful resource for career discovery.

What is MiddleGalaxy?

This space-themed game makes career exploration accessible and fun. It is designed for middle school classrooms and makes it easy to learn about options in high school and beyond.

Students can explore career possibilities by being introduced to knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in various in-demand occupations in Texas by playing a game. The game is also available as a mobile app, and students can play independently at home.

College and Career Action Plans

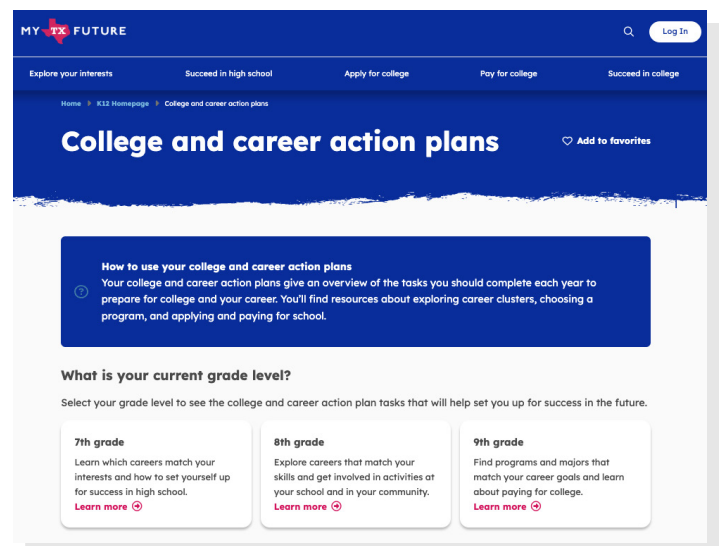
Use the action plans to guide 7th or 8th grade students through the career planning process and provide insights on what to anticipate in 9th grade.

To view these action plans on
My Texas Future:

- Ask students to log into their [My Texas Future](#) account.
- Guide students to hover over the Succeed in High School tab.
- Instruct students to click on the [Action Plans](#) option.
- Ask students to select their current grade level.
- Instruct them to click Learn More.

For printable action plans, see Appendix.

For demonstration purposes, guide students to select and explore the 7th grade option.



Milestones for This Section

- Students will explore various career options using [MiddleGalaxy](#).
- Students will identify their interests and relate them to potential careers.
- Students will understand the steps needed to achieve their career goals.

Activity: Discover New Careers

Estimated Time

20- 30 Minutes

Essential Question

What can I learn about new careers using My Texas Future and MiddleGalaxy?

Materials Needed

- Computers or tablets with internet access
- Whiteboard and markers
- Career planning questions (see below)

Preparation

- Ensure all students have access to computers or tablets.
- Create student accounts on [MiddleGalaxy](#) or ensure they have login information.
- Prepare handouts with career planning questions.

Activity Introduction (10 minutes)

- Begin with a brief discussion about why career planning is important.
- Ask students if they have ever thought about what they want to be when they grow up and why.

Career Planning Discussion (15-20 minutes)

Post the following questions on the board for students to discuss with a partner.

- What are your top three career interests from My Texas Future?
- What skills or subjects are important for these careers?
- What education or training is needed for these careers?
- Which career seems the most interesting to you and why?
- What steps can you take now to start preparing for this career?

Career Planning with MiddleGalaxy (20 minutes)

[MiddleGalaxy](#) is a self-paced, on line career exploration game that will allow students to choose a space cadet that personifies them. Students will be tasked to build a space team to complete important missions. These missions will require students to identify careers that best fit what the mission needs. These careers align with the top growing jobs in Texas.

Now that students have their Interests and Skills quizzes results, introduce [MiddleGalaxy](#) as another career discovery tool. Students should have already created an account.

- Introduce [MiddleGalaxy](#) and explain that it is a fun, interactive platform to explore different careers and learn about what they entail.
- Ask students to login into their MiddleGalaxy account and begin reading game instructions.
- Allow students 20 minutes to play the game independently.

Discussion and Reflection (10-15 minutes)

- Ask students to save their game, exit the site and come back for a full group discussion.
- Ask students to share their findings and thoughts about the careers they explored.
- Discuss how their interests and strengths can guide their future career choices.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Recap: Summarize the key points of the lesson, emphasizing the importance of starting career exploration early.
- Next Steps: Encourage students to continue using [MiddleGalaxy](#) at home and discuss their career interests with their families.

Other Opportunities for Career Exploration

Career Fairs. Students can benefit a lot from a career fair that puts them in direct contact with local professionals. Hosting an in-person or virtual career fair for your middle schoolers can be an engaging way to:

- Involve the community in your students' education.
- Expose students to new professions.
- Expand student knowledge on professions they had been considering.
- Give students and professionals an opportunity to chat.

Interviews and profiles. Don't miss our special Texas Roadtrip series in partnership with [Roadtrip Nation](#). In this four-part documentary, real high school students across Texas hit the road to interview their career heroes and older peers. Each episode clocks in at 30 minutes, so it's a great series for a few classroom periods or for homework.

For more information on supporting students in career exploration go to the [Texas OnCourse Website](#).



Stage 4: Academic Planning

At this stage, middle school students should begin learning about the course offerings for their potential career pathways and endorsements. Use [My Texas Future](#) to allow students to explore endorsements and begin aligning their studies with their career interests. By using My Texas Future, you can help students stay focused and successfully reach their academic goals.

Resources

- [Advanced Academic Courses](#) (Texas OnCourse)
- [Sample Path to High School Graduation](#) (PDF)
- 7th and 8th grade action plans (see Appendix)

Milestones for This Section

- Students will understand how Texas high school graduation options affect their college and career plans.
- Students will understand the opportunities for earning college credit in high school, and the steps to take in preparation for advanced coursework.

Activity: Start College in High School

Estimated Time

45-60 Minutes

Essential Questions

What opportunities to earn college credit are available in 9th grade? How about later in high school?

Materials Needed

- List of questions for students to ask their counselors and advisors during their PGP meetings:
 - What opportunities to earn college credit are available in 9th grade? How about later in high school?
 - What can I do this year to prepare for advanced coursework later in high school?
 - What type of prerequisites (other courses or specific assessment requirements) do I need to meet to take advanced courses?

- How can I prepare for and take the college readiness assessments required for college-level classes?
- Example prerequisite flowcharts for common subjects
- Information on TSIA and college credit transfer policies

Activity Introduction and My Texas Future Navigation (5-10 minutes)

- Explain that while college may seem far away, students can start earning college credits in high school.
- Highlight that Texas public schools are required to offer advanced coursework that allows students to earn college credit.
- Direct students to click on the “Learn More” option under the 8th grade tab.
- Ask students to scroll to the “Summer” section of the page.
- Instruct them to click on the “[Take the PSAT 8/9](#) or PreACT” link under Step 2: Take Practice Exams.
- Ensure students are now on the “[Start College in High School](#)” page within their My Texas Future account.

Independent Reading (5-10 minutes)

- Allow students time to read the content on the page.
- Bring students back as a whole group to discuss what they have just read.

Discussion Prompts for Academic Planning (10-15 Minutes)

- Define prerequisites and provide examples (e.g., Algebra I before Geometry, English I before English II).
- Discuss the importance of meeting prerequisites for advanced courses and dual credit classes.
- Explain the role of Pre-AP courses as prerequisites for AP courses.
- Introduce the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) as a requirement for dual credit courses.
- Emphasize the need to discuss TSIA testing dates and retesting policies with the counselor or advisor.
- Discuss the potential challenges of transferring AP, IB, and dual credit courses to colleges and universities.
- Explain that credit transfer policies vary by institution, and the importance of researching and understanding these policies.
- Highlight the differences between public and private institutions, and in-state versus out-of-state colleges.

Personal Graduation Plans Meeting Preparation (5-10 minutes)

- Ask students to draft a list of questions for their counselor or advisor about earning college credit and advanced coursework.
- Encourage students to identify which advanced courses they are interested in and what prerequisites need to be completed.
- Provide students with campus and district course offerings and CTE pathways.
- Provide the list of questions via handout or ask students to take a picture of the questions on the board.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Reinforce the importance of planning early for college credit opportunities.
- Encourage students to regularly meet with their counselor or advisor to stay informed and on track with their academic and career goals.

Activity: Starting a Plan

Estimated Time

20-30 Minutes

Essential Questions

What should my academic plan include? What courses or pathway endorsement should I explore?

Materials Needed

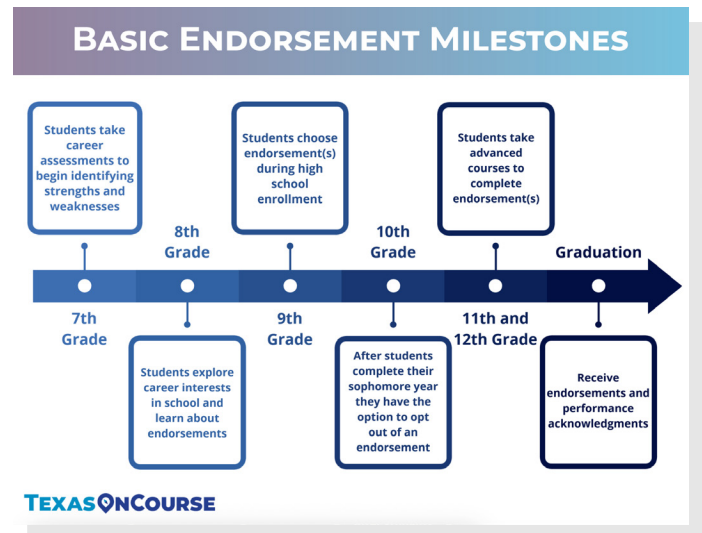
- My Texas Future Career Explorer results
- Computer or laptops

Activity Introduction (5 minutes)

What classes you take today may affect what classes you can take tomorrow. Setting educational goals in high school can help keep you on track for your future, and that starts with picking the right class. Today we will begin academic planning, by reviewing potential pathways.

Independent Review and Reflection (15 minutes)

- Ask students to log into their My Texas Future profile and hover over Succeed in High School, read through [Create a Plan](#) and then select [Set Goals](#) at the bottom of the article.
- Ask students to read the sections about Endorsements and post the Basic Endorsement Milestones timeline that students can reference while they are reading.
- Allow students 5-10 minutes to read the “Pick the Right Mix of Classes” and “Understand your GPA and Why it Matters” sections.



Start Planning (10 Minutes)

- Print a copy of [TEA's Graduation Toolkit](#) for each student to review.
- Ask students to review the [Programs of Study](#), selecting and taking notes on the ones that most interest them.
- Explain the specifics of how your school goes about getting a student's classes scheduled. Let students and their parents know the best way they can be in touch with their counselor to schedule their PGP conference.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

Now that students have information about what courses they could be offered and their counselor's contact information, ask students the following:

- Where and how can they find their counselor?
- If they have already had their PGP conference?
- Share what pathways are offered at the school?

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.

Additional Resource

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



Stage 5: Decision Making

Now that 8th grade students have learned about career pathways and endorsement programs, they should start making key academic decisions. Students should consider factors like GPA and advanced-level classes and be introduced to the college search process. Use Milestones for This Section to guide students in comparing college programs.

Milestones for This Section

- Students understand Grade Point Average (GPA) and how it relates to college and career success.
- Students learn about endorsements and career paths.
- Students understand high school coursework and its impact on GPA.
- Students have a list of colleges they are considering.

Activity: Endorsements and Career Paths

Estimated Time

45 minutes

Essential Question

What should my academic plan include? What courses or pathway endorsement should I explore?

Materials Needed

- Computers or tablets for students to access My Texas Future
- Projector and screen for demonstration
- Print outs of [Career Cluster Skills](#) for each student

Activity Introduction (5 minutes)

- Project the [Teacher Training Career Path](#) example for the class.
- Give students a few minutes to study it, then ask: Which endorsement would best support someone on this career path, and why?
- Facilitate a short discussion to highlight there may be more than one possible answer.

Endorsement and Career Pathways Research (20 minutes)

- Introduce endorsements as broad categories of study that guide students toward meeting graduation requirements while exploring areas of interest. Then explain that career clusters group similar careers together, and career pathways are more specific routes within those clusters.
- Explain the following Think-Pair-Share activity:
 - Students will each write down one question about endorsements and one about career pathways.
 - Pair them up to research the answers to each other's questions using the provided resources. Remind students it's okay if they don't find a perfect answer—what matters is learning how endorsements connect to future options. They can use the following links as starting points:
 - [Endorsements](#) and Career Paths (My Texas Future)
 - CTE Programs of Study (Texas Education Agency)
 - Career Clusters (Texas OnCourse PDF)
 - In the last five minutes of this activity, call on groups to share one question and the answer they found.

Exploring Career Cluster Skills (10 minutes)

- After sharing out, pass out the [Career Cluster Skills](#) worksheet. Students review their answers and narrow down which career cluster(s) they are most interested in.
- Have them highlight their top three career clusters they are interested in.
- Explain that choosing a career path is like moving through a funnel. At the wide end are endorsements, which connect to a student's broad interests and skills. Career clusters narrow that focus to specific groups of related careers. Finally, career pathways represent the most narrow part of the funnel with intentional steps that lead to specific outcomes.

Conclusion (10 minutes)

- Students should draw a picture of a funnel. At the widest part of the funnel, write out an endorsement they are interested in. Then in the middle section write a career cluster that would fit into that endorsement. Finally, in the narrowest part, write out a career path they could follow within that endorsement.
- On the back of the page, students should explain how their endorsement, cluster, and career path connect to each other. If they aren't sure how this applies to them personally, they can create a hypothetical scenario that shows how someone might choose an endorsement based on a career goal.

Activity: Introduction to GPA Using My Texas Future

Estimated Time

20-30 Minutes

Essential Question

How can students use My Texas Future to understand GPA and its significance in planning for high school and beyond?

Materials Needed

- Computers or tablets for students to access My Texas Future
- Projector and screen for demonstration
- GPA calculation handouts (optional)
- Access to [My Texas Future website](#)

Additional Resources to consider:

- [The School Counselor and Career Development](#)
- [Content from the TEA School Counseling Page regarding Guidance](#)
- [Curriculum TEA](#) Graduation Toolkit

Activity Introduction: (5 minutes)

- Briefly explain what GPA is and why it is crucial for academic and career planning.
- Introduce My Texas Future as a valuable tool for exploring GPA, high school coursework, and future college and career options.
- Guide students to hover over the Succeed in High School tab and select College and Career Action Plans.
- Ask students to click on the appropriate grade level (e.g., 8th grade) and select “Learn More.”
- Ask students to read about the importance of GPA and start planning their academic future.

GPA Research (10 minutes)

- Define GPA and explain how it is calculated (e.g., A=4, B=3, etc.).
- Discuss the significance of GPA in high school, college admissions, and scholarships.
- Explain how GPA reflects students’ academic performance and readiness for college.

Exploring My Texas Future (20 minutes)

- Show students how to use My Texas Future to compare different college programs based on GPA requirements.

- Encourage students to explore high school coursework options and understand how their choices will impact their GPA.
- Ask students to use the comparison tool on My Texas Future to evaluate at least three different colleges.
- Encourage students to email high school seniors for insights about their high school experience, GPA management, and college application process.
- Provide a list of recommended high school seniors and their email addresses (provided by the high school counselor).
- Suggest questions for students to ask, such as:
 - How did you manage your GPA in high school?
 - What advice do you have for someone just starting to think about college?
 - How did you choose which colleges to apply to?
 - Explain the importance of GPA, advanced-level classes, and extracurricular activities in the college application process.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

Sample script for middle school students:

Let's go over what we learned today:

1. **GPA Matters:** Your GPA is a number that shows how well you're doing in school. It's important because it helps you get into high school classes, colleges, and even get scholarships.
2. **My Texas Future:** This is a helpful website where you can explore high school classes, check your GPA, and start thinking about college. It's a great way to plan your future.
3. **Next Steps:** Keep exploring My Texas Future at home. The choices you make now in school will help you reach your goals later on.

Before we finish, does anyone have any questions or thoughts they'd like to share?

Activity: Build your College List using My Texas Future

Milestone for This Activity

- Students have a list of colleges they are considering

Estimated Time

20- 30 Minutes

Essential Question

How can students use My Texas Future to explore college options, understand factors to consider in their search, and gather insights from high school seniors?

Materials Needed

- Computers or tablets for students to access My Texas Future
- Projector and screen for demonstration
- List of recommended high school seniors and their email addresses from the high school counselor
- Questions for high school seniors

Activity Introduction: (5 minutes)

- Briefly explain the importance of starting the college search early.
- Introduce My Texas Future as a valuable tool for exploring college options and planning for the future.
- Guide students to hover over the Succeed in High School link and select College and Career Action Plans.
- Ask students to click on the appropriate grade level (e.g., 8th grade) and select Learn More.
- Direct students to the section where they can start exploring college options. Show students how to use My Texas Future to compare different college programs.
- Discuss important factors to consider, such as location, size, programs offered, and admission requirements.
- Encourage students to use the comparison tool to evaluate at least three different colleges using the Program Explorer.

Factors to Consider in College Search (10 minutes)

- Explain the importance of GPA, advanced-level classes, and extracurricular activities in the college application process.
- Discuss other factors such as financial aid, campus culture, and career services.

Creating a College Profile (20 minutes)

- Ask students to research one college they are interested in using the information from My Texas Future
- The research should include the college's name, location, programs offered, admission requirements, and why they are interested in this college.
- Students can present their prospective college to the class.

Activity: Senior Insight

Milestone for This Activity

Students have time to explore the college application process by interviewing a High School Senior.

Estimated Time

20- 30 Minutes

Essential Questions

What do I need to consider when applying for college? What can I do in high school to make the application process easier?

Activity Introduction (10-15 minutes)

Encourage students to email high school seniors for insights about their college application process. The chart below provides some suggested questions to include in an email.

Questions to Ask High School Seniors

After today's discussion, email a high school senior from the recommended list and consider the following questions to learn more about the college application process.

College Application Process:

- What resources did you find most helpful during your college search?
- What surprised you the most about the college application experience?
- Is there anything you wish you had known before starting the college application process?

Admissions Criteria:

- What factors did you consider when choosing which colleges to apply to?
- How did you prepare for standardized tests (SAT, ACT)?
- What advice do you have for managing the college application timeline and deadlines?
- How did you approach writing your college essays or personal statements?
- Can you share any insights on securing letters of recommendation?

Financial Aid and Scholarships:

How did you navigate the financial aid and scholarship application process?

Other Questions:

Is there anything you wish you had known before starting the college application process?

Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Summarize the key points of the lesson.
- Encourage students to continue using My Texas Future to explore college options and plan for their future.
- Remind students to regularly meet with their counselor to discuss their academic and career goals.

Additional Resources

- [The School Counselor and Career Development](#)
- [Content from the TEA School Counseling Page regarding Guidance Curriculum](#)
- [TEA Graduation Toolkit](#)

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.

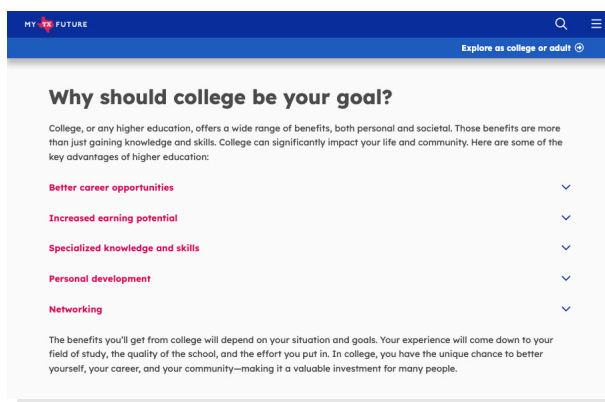
SECTION IV

Apply For College

My Texas Future offers comprehensive guidance on preparing for and applying to colleges, helping students build confidence through relevant information and resources. 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.

Milestones for This Section

- Students can independently use My Texas Future to explore college programs.
- Students understand the college level courses offered by their school.

Activity: Understanding the Importance of College for Middle School Students

This lesson will support students in identifying why attending college matters, emphasizing the benefits, and illustrating the career opportunities associated with obtaining a college degree.

Estimated Time

45-60 Minutes

Essential Question

Why is college important, and 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

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.
- You can also consider using [Texas Reality Check](#) to supplement the readings and allow students to connect the lifestyle they want with the importance of attending college.

Discussion on the Benefits of Completing College: Economic, Personal, and Social Gains (20-30 minutes)

Note: The following discussion should be tailored to fit your class. Feel free to modify or skip parts of the script as needed.

Sample Script for Middle School Counselors:

“Today, we’re going to discuss the benefits of completing college. Understanding these benefits can help you see the value of education and how it can positively impact your future. We’ll explore three main areas: economic benefits, personal growth, and social impact.”

Instruction

Start by asking the students questions, such as, “Who here has thought about going to college?” or “What do you think are some good reasons to go to college?” This will get students thinking and involved in the discussion.

Economic Benefits

“Let’s start by talking about how going to college can help you financially in the future:

- **Higher Salaries:** Graduating from college often means you can earn more money than someone who only finishes high school.
- **Better Job Stability:** College graduates tend to have more secure jobs, reducing the risk of unemployment.
- **Broader Career Opportunities:** A college degree opens doors to a wider range of job options, many of which require higher education.”

Instruction

Provide examples of careers that require a college degree and share salary comparisons to illustrate the financial benefits.

Personal Growth

“Now, let’s discuss how college can help you grow as a person and develop important skills:

- **Enhanced Critical Thinking Skills:** College teaches you how to think critically and solve problems, which are skills that are useful in all areas of life.
- **Exposure to Diverse Ideas and Cultures:** In college, you meet people from various backgrounds, helping you understand and appreciate different perspectives.
- **Improved Self-Discipline:** Managing college responsibilities helps you develop discipline and good time management, which are important traits for success.”

Instruction

Share personal stories or examples of how college experiences contributed to personal growth and skill development.

Social Impact

“Finally, let’s look at how a college education can positively affect your health and community involvement:

- **Better Health Outcomes:** College graduates often have better health and live longer because they usually have access to better healthcare and make healthier choices.
- **Increased Civic Participation:** Graduates are more likely to vote, volunteer, and be involved in their communities, making a positive difference.
- **Improved Quality of Life:** Higher earnings, job stability, and personal growth lead to a more satisfying and fulfilling life.”

Instruction

Discuss real-world examples of how education has led to better health and more active community involvement. Encourage students to think about how they can make a difference in their communities.

Conclusion/Instruction

- Summarize the main points, reinforcing that college education offers numerous benefits, including financial stability, personal development, and a positive societal impact.
- Encourage students to consider these benefits as they think about their future education and career goals.

Discussion on Career Opportunities with a College Degree (10 minutes)

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

Pathways to College Credit Discussion (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.

Explore Plan for School (5 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.

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.

Additional Resource:

- [Automatic College Admission](#) (Texas Education Agency)

SECTION V

Engaging Families and Caregivers

Read this section for tips and strategies for building strong partnerships with families and caregivers when planning for postsecondary education and career pathways. Also, 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

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 and 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.

Name:		Date:	
<p>PUZZLE #1</p> <p>The Bookworm's Riddle</p> <p>I'm a place where stories come alive, with heroes, villains, and worlds to dive into. What am I?</p> <p>Answer: Library</p> <p>Question: What kinds of books do you like best?</p>		<p>PUZZLE #2</p> <p>The Creative Code</p> <p>I'm a space where colors flow and music plays, where you can build, design, and find your own ways. What am I?</p> <p>Answer: Art Room or Makerspace</p> <p>Question: Are you into art, music, writing, or building things?</p>	
<p>PUZZLE #3</p> <p>The Tech Teaser</p> <p>I'm a zone where screens glow and circuits hum, where problems are solved, and new skills are won. What am I?</p> <p>Answer: Computer Lab</p> <p>Question: Are you a computer whiz, a gamer, or just curious about tech?</p>		<p>PUZZLE #4</p> <p>The Fun Zone Challenge</p> <p>I'm a place where laughter fills the air, where you can compete, relax, and share. What am I?</p> <p>Answer: Gym or Game Room</p> <p>Question: What kind of games are your jam? Video games, board games, sports, or brain teasers?</p>	
<p>PUZZLE #5</p> <p>The Big Question</p> <p>Imagine a future where you can choose a job with big bucks or one you can't refuse. Which would you pick, and why?</p> <p>Answer: There's no right or wrong answer!</p>			

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.

Build your resume: Create a profile and 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.

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

Next

Once you complete your checklist for 7th grade, learn about what tasks are coming up in 8th grade.

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 and build a list of your favorites in the "Explore Programs" feature.

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.

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.

Next

Once you complete your checklist for 8th grade, learn about what's next in 9th grade.