

Take Stock in Children Innovation Collection:

Virtual Mentoring Toolkit for Mentors



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TSIC would also like to give a special thanks to the Take Stock in Children local affiliates, The Immokalee Foundation and the Education Foundation of Collier County- Champions for Learning who contributed their time and expertise to field test and refine the virtual mentoring model.

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Finally, a special thank you to Ethan Fieldman, President of Study Edge and Take Stock in Children board member for generously making GoBoard.com available to the TSIC network.

The increased number of students served and the continually growing demand means that UNISON innovations will provide the network with opportunities that efficiently use resources and maintain a high level of programmatic quality and service delivery. Scaling these elements will not only benefit the TSIC network, but also will accelerate the progress of national scaling efforts. Network-wide adoption will effectively result in additional proof points and data, contributing to a climate conducive to national uptake.

Congratulations!

Take Stock in Children has a proven record of helping Florida's deserving low-income students graduate from high school and complete a post-secondary education. As a *Take Stock in Children* mentor, you are a vital part of an extraordinarily successful program that offers these young people real hope for their future.

You have chosen to make a difference in the life of a child who can benefit from a precious commodity today: time. Your direct involvement with your student will shape their aspirations and help them realize their educational goals. Every *Take Stock in Children* scholar is a distinct individual with special qualities, gifts, and needs. Every *Take Stock in Children* mentor likewise brings his/her own particular blend of knowledge, resulting in a unique mentoring relationship.

Take Stock in Children has developed this Mentor Toolkit to make it easier for you to guide your student on their path to post-secondary education. This toolkit consists of practical, enjoyable activities that you can easily implement to promote your student's success in school and in life. The activities are based on the best practices and findings of interviews and focused discussions conducted with educators, university personnel, and experts in the field of mentoring and education.

The Mentor Toolkit includes grade level activities designed to be completed within one mentoring session with the student. Each activity provides an objective, a list of materials needed, instructions, and space for written responses. The activities are presented in a logical, sequential way; however, you may choose to select activities randomly, as your student's needs or interests arise. Students will be encouraged to explore their strengths and limitations and will be guided through the full range of skills and information needed to pursue career goals. You are encouraged to review each section with your student and decide where to start.

Please remember that your primary task as a mentor is to meet regularly with your student. Students should be encouraged, but not forced, to talk about such things as preparing for college and planning for a career. The two most important things mentors can do for their students are to listen to them and to encourage them to succeed.

Take Stock in Children depends greatly on mentors to help children achieve their academic dreams. Like your student, you will receive support and encouragement every step of the way. If you ever have a question, please do not hesitate to contact your *Take Stock in Children* staff.

Thank you for being a Take Stock in Children mentor.

Chapter 1



Introduction

Why Virtual Mentoring?

The Take Stock in Children (TSIC) model of support is built upon the foundation of positive relationships that students develop with their mentors. The impact that a caring adult can have on a student's academic and social-emotional development has been consistently proven in field-based research. There is strong evidence that a community-based mentoring approach decreases drug and alcohol use, enhances peer and parent-child relationships, increases school attendance, and improves attitudes about and performance in school (Tierney, Grossman and Resch, 1995). These positive outcomes are also illustrated in the outstanding results of TSIC students. Each TSIC child is matched with a caring adult mentor who meets with the student at his/her school for an hour each week. Mentors provide academic and behavioral motivation, guidance, friendship, and support. This effective mentor support has greatly contributed to TSIC's results with:

- 96% of TSIC students completing high school on time;
- 96% of TSIC students enrolling in college; and
- 67% of TSIC students completing college compared to the state average of 25% for students in poverty.

The overall success of the program, coupled with the increasing numbers of students in need, encourages affiliates to target growth in an effort to increase the number of students served across the organization. However, with growth also comes new challenges, particularly in regard to finding the number of mentors needed to serve the increasing population of students. This is especially true for rural programs. Therefore, TSIC has designed a virtual mentoring model, which can greatly assist organizations in effectively and efficiently supporting greater numbers of students.

Definition

Virtual mentoring is a limited-use supplement to the 1:1 adult-student support model where participants rely on electronic tools to communicate for some meetings. For Take Stock in Children, supervised video conferencing is the only approved method for virtual mentoring. Virtual mentoring is based on a mutually beneficial relationship between a mentor and a student, with the mentor providing the student with knowledge, advice, encouragement, and modeling. Virtual mentoring is intended to be used only in cases where schedules do not permit face-to-

face mentoring throughout the school year. Virtual Mentoring should only supplement in-person mentoring with mentors conducting at least 9 in-person, face-to-face sessions per year. The number of pairs using virtual mentoring is limited, as this form of mentoring is not meant to replace the in-person model that has made Take Stock in Children so successful. The State Office will approve the number of virtual mentors for each affiliate on a case-by-case basis.

Characteristics of Virtual Mentoring

- ✓ 1:1 meetings between a mentor and student
- ✓ GoBoard.com is used for video calls to facilitate
- ✓ Sessions are recorded through GoBoard.com
- mentor-student contact when an in-person visit is not possible
- ✓ Pairs meet at a minimum of 2x per month for 30 minutes
- ✓ Students must participate in a supervised school or TSIC sanctioned setting
- ✓ Online sessions are initiated and supervised by designated program staff
- ✓ The number of pairs using virtual mentoring is limited and the State Office must approve the percentage of an affiliate's mentors using the model.
- ✓ For any pair using virtual mentoring, at least 9 mentoring sessions should be in person.

- ✓ Virtual mentoring implementation plan must be submitted by programs and approved by the State Office.
-

Benefits of Virtual Mentoring

There are several benefits reported by sites that have piloted the virtual mentoring approach.

Removal of Barriers to Regular Contact — Virtual mentoring allows mentor-student relationships to occur consistently, even when geographical, time or financial constraints hinder in-person meetings. Furthermore, virtual mentoring has low barriers to entry, requiring only Internet access to facilitate.

Opportunity for More Diverse Mentors — Since the scheduling and geographic concerns associated with in-person face-to-face mentoring relationships/programs are minimized, more mentors can participate. This diversity can help expose students to mentors in a variety of careers in regional locations. (e.g. female students may gain access to women role models in certain career fields, that may not be otherwise present in the context of their high schools, neighborhoods, or families).

Increased Mentor Match Rate — Geographical barriers and the consistent time commitment are the two greatest deterrents for potential adult volunteers otherwise interested in mentoring. Virtual mentoring resolves these issues, effectively increasing the rate of mentor recruitment and matching. Also, GoBoard.com

doesn't require advanced hardware beyond a desktop, laptop computer, tablet, or other devices. Most new devices have built-in web cameras and for those that are not equipped, a small web video device is reasonably affordable.

Challenges of Virtual Mentoring

While there are clear benefits that make virtual mentoring a positive solution for many programs looking to boost their mentor pool while maintaining quality services, there are also challenges that need to be considered.

Potential for Miscommunication – While online communication is efficient, it can also invite misunderstanding. When virtual mentoring, it is important to be considerate and thoughtful about communication, since the person you are speaking with is not in the room with you. It may take some targeted effort to overcome the digital divide. Communication can also be negatively impacted by technical issues, such as limited sound quality, broadband issues causing downtime, and connectivity issues.

Need for Technical Literacy – While virtual communication platforms are straightforward, mentors and students must have some basic technical skills. Older individuals or people without access to computers may find the concept of virtual mentoring intimidating or outside of their comfort zone of 1:1 communication.

Ensuring Proper Supervision and Security – Virtual mentor-student relationships are subject to the same Take Stock in Children policies and procedures as in-person pairings. However, the Internet is vast and regulation of contact can be difficult. To ensure that online communication between mentors and students is appropriate, programs must take extra steps to ensure that online video access is taking place during school sessions only and that all contact is initiated and supervised by Take Stock in Children staff members or designated school staff acting as Take Stock in Children school liaisons.

Navigating School District Policies – While virtual mentoring can remove barriers to regular contact, there are related challenges that arise, the approved platform has to conform with school district policies. Many districts have restrictions for this type of communication and a plan of permission and process through each district needs to be navigated and approved before a virtual communication system can be put in place.

Chapter 2



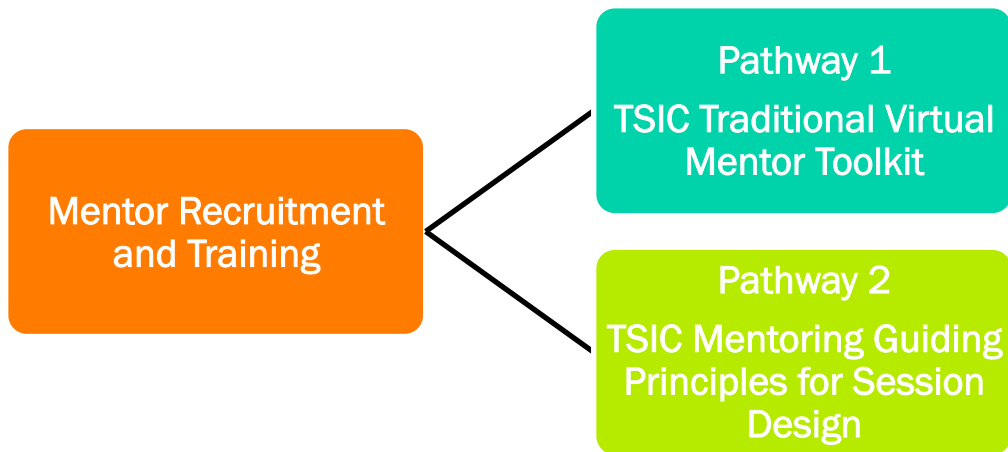
Conducting Effective Mentor Sessions

Two Pathways for Implementation

Virtual mentoring is most successful when mentors and students are given the tools that are well matched to their individual needs and experiences. TSIC has found that there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to a virtual-mentoring curriculum. In fact, during the data collection process that resulted in this manual, mentors’ use of materials varied greatly according to individual experience and preference. Therefore, two paths are offered here that mentors

can take when choosing content and structure for their sessions. The tools accompanying these paths range from the highly structured TSIC Virtual Mentoring Curriculum with a set scope and sequence to the TSIC Mentoring Guiding Principles that mentors can refer to as they build their sessions. In most cases, mentors take information from both pathways to customize a mentoring experience that is tailored to the needs of their student.

Mentor Session Implementation Pathways



TSIC Mentoring Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are useful for those mentors who prefer to self-design and structure their own mentor sessions. These guiding principles include step-by-step instructions about how to use best practices and lessons learned to produce the most effective and impactful mentor sessions possible.

The following guiding principles represent the core mission and goal of Take Stock in Children mentoring. These principles should be the foundation of all mentoring activities and suggestions. The section then discusses how to go about designing and structuring a mentor session with these principles in mind. As part of this discussion, resources and best practices are included for each principle.

Guiding Principle 1: Help your students experience personal growth and development through goal setting, envisioning the future, and defining positive values.

Guiding Principle 2: Support your students' academic success and help them build the skills and strategies they need and connect them to resources.

Guiding Principle 3: Assist your students in planning for college in high school by monitoring their progress toward post-secondary enrollment.

Guiding Principle 4: Explore careers with your students by giving them practical information about working in the community and making them motivated and excited about the future.

How to Design a Mentor Session



Planning a mentoring lesson is very similar to designing a lesson plan that might be implemented in a classroom setting. Mentors should follow these steps when determining what to include in and how to approach a session. Mentors with previous educational experience may have lesson plan development techniques that work for them, but a good rule of thumb is to always produce a written plan as a guide.

1. State the Objective – Mentors should ask themselves what they want their student to learn or gain from the mentoring session. This objective should be directly tied to one of the four guiding principles listed above.

2. Investigate Activity Options – The Internet is a vast resource full of free advice and ideas for conducting effective mentor sessions. The next section offers resources for each guiding principle that can help mentors get started with generating activities. However, Google searches on specific topics can also direct mentors to ideal activities that fit the stated objective.

3. Plan Realistic Timing – One of the most challenging aspects of planning a lesson or mentor session is making sure that the planned activities fit comfortably within the session's timeframe. When timing goes awry, it is usually because there was too much activity or content packed into a session. It is better to end early or plan for an intentional pause so that a topic can be continued next session than to not get to the core content of a lesson. However, there will be instances where perhaps an early part of the discussion leads to an incredibly rich and meaningful conversation that was not planned. In cases like this, mentors use their best judgment about how to revise their plan real-time in response to student need.

4. Write Down a Plan –The following structure is suggested to help mentors organize and record their plan for each mentor session. It can be used to record the session objective, introduction, main activity, resources and materials, informal assessment, and closure

Mentor Session Structure

Topic: This is the title of your session and should reflect the guiding principle and objective in an abbreviated way.

Objective: This critical piece of planning defines the session and sets the stage for success. No matter how fun or important a session activity is, without a clear objective, it misses the mark.

Guiding Principle: Reference one of the four guiding principles listed in the beginning of the chapter.

Resources/Materials: List all resources and materials needed for a successful session. Nothing is worse than having a well-planned session only to find that important materials are missing when the time comes to use them. (For e-mentors, physical materials are not possible, so plan activities accordingly).

Introduction: Give your student an overview of the session. Describe what you will be discussing and give an outline of what is expected. This is also an opportunity to activate prior knowledge and find out what your student already knows about your given topic.

Main Activity: This is the core of the mentor session, where you are providing direct coaching to your student. Be sure that whatever activity is chosen reflects what your student knows and what you want him or her to internalize.

Assessment: Every mentor session should include an informal or anecdotal assessment built into it. This is a way for mentors to check student understanding and find out if additional support is needed.

Closure: Every session should have an opportunity to summarize or wrap up their discussion. Some examples of how this could be done include: writing a sentence about what they learned, briefly stating what they liked/disliked about the session or making suggestions for follow-up topics and activities.

How to Support Guiding Principles

The following section offers best practices, ideas, and tips about how to create content and mentoring sessions that align with the Mentoring Guiding Principles.

Guiding Principle 1: Help students experience personal growth and development through goal setting, envisioning the future, and defining positive values.

Activities that reflect this principle might include exploring personal interests, setting realistic short and long-term goals, and focusing on what lifelong success and happiness means. When searching for and developing activities, look for ones that support:

- Goal setting
- Staying on Track
- Positive Outlook
- Peer Pressure
- Bullying
- Personal Values

The following websites may help mentors continue to explore personal interests and values with students:

- www.viacharacter.org -- A free personality survey helps individuals evaluate their individual strengths.
- www.kevan.org/johari -- A Johari Window tool allows individuals to draw on feedback from friends and family members in order to create a personality map.
- www.lifevaluesinventory.org -- An inventory assessment identifies students' values and provides tools to ex-

plore careers and educational majors aligned with each value (financial prosperity, concern for others, independence, etc.).

Helpful Tips

- ✓ Try to relate to students by thinking about how you viewed the world at their age.
 - ✓ Finding common ground about shared interests that will strengthen your relationship with your students.
 - ✓ Remind students that they are in control of the way they react to a situation and to remain positive when dealing with difficult moments.
 - ✓ Help students identify some positive experiences each week.
-

Guiding Principle 2: Support your student's academic success and help build the skills and strategies needed and connect them to resources.

Activities that reflect this principle might focus on basic organizational skills and self-discipline. When searching for and developing activities, look for ones that support:

- Learning Styles
- Homework
- Note-taking
- Speed Reading
- Standardized Tests
- Study Habits
- Time Management and Planning

The following websites may help you continue to explore academic skills with your student:

- www.khanacademy.com – Students pursue self-paced learning about math, art, computer programming, economics, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, finance, and history through instructional videos.
- www.funbrain.com – Educational activities & games are created for students to reinforce skills learned in school.
- www.familyeducation.com -- This site offers the user information about adolescent issues.
- www.powa.org This instructional site for students offers tips and exercises for improving writing skills.

Guiding Principle 3: Assist your student in planning for college in high school by monitoring progress toward post-secondary enrollment.

Activities that reflect this principle might focus on preparing for college and understanding financial aid opportunities. When searching for and developing activities, look for ones that support:

- Application Process
- High School vs. College Experiences
- Campus Tours
- College Degrees
- State Colleges
- FAFSA
- Florida Prepaid

Helpful Tips

- ✓ Help your students make using their planners a habit by asking to see them when you visit.
- ✓ Students should review notes daily. The more they read them, the more they will learn, and the better they will do on a test.
- ✓ Helping your students prepare for their standardized tests can result in increased confidence and better overall testing performance.
- ✓ Check registration forms for dates, registration deadlines, instructions, test center codes, and other information.

The following websites may help you continue to explore college readiness with your student:

- <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/estimate> – This site offers a tool for younger students called the FAFSA4Caster calculator to estimate what financial aid they're eligible for based on current family income
- www.fafsa.ed.gov -- Information about FAFSA preparation and filing is provided.
- www.navigatingyourfinancialfuture.org -- This site offers information about FAFSA completion assistance at locations across Florida.
- www.fastweb.com -- A free scholarship search helps connect students with resources.
- www.foridashines.org -- This site has a self-directed college and career search tool.

- www.collegeboard.org and www.act.org -- These sites house college and career exploration, alongside test prep and college readiness information.
- www.FSassessments.org -- Information about Florida's standardized tests can be found here.
- www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org -- This site details academic requirements for Florida Bright Futures and other scholarships.
- www.fl DOE.org/academics/graduation-requirements -- A helpful review of academic requirements for Florida students is published each year. Students are always held to the requirements which were current in their 9th-grade year

Guiding Principle 4: Explore careers with your student giving them practical information about working in the community and making them motivated and excited about the future.

Activities that reflect this principle might focus on matching individual interests to career paths and helping students understand all the factors to be considered when making a career choice. When searching for and developing activities, look for ones that support:

- How to Apply for a Job
- Career Exploration
- Creating a Cover Letter

- Developing a Resume
- Job Interviews
- Workplace Knowledge

Helpful Tips

- ✓ Discuss various career choices and the education required for them.
 - ✓ Encourage students to research the specific requirements at the schools they are considering attending.
 - ✓ Stress the importance of obtaining as many scholarships as possible.
-

The following websites may help you continue to explore careers with your student:

- www.monster.com/career-advice -- Students are provided with examples of current job postings and helps them to research careers.
- www.careeronestop.org/toolkit -- Employment trends and projections, salary guides, and career exploration tests help students navigate early career readiness.
- <http://www.bls.gov/k12/student.s.htm> -- Here, students can see an example of an occupational handbook.
- www.floridashines.org -- This site offers students opportunities to take career assessments, and explore career information linked to majors, interests, and skills.

Chapter 3



TSIC Virtual Mentoring Curriculum

Section 1: Getting to Know You

When mentors and students share their interests, values, and personal experiences, they begin to forge a bond of mutual trust and respect. *Your goal as a mentor* is to guide, support, and empower your student as they begin to understand how their goals, interests, values, and experiences affect their future academic success.

Resource List:

On the Take Stock in Children website (www.takestockinchildren.org) you will find additional activities you can complete with your student, as well as resources and research that you may find helpful. Look for activities supporting:

- Goal Setting
- Staying on Track

- Positive Outlook
- Peer Pressure
- Bullying
- Personal Values

The following websites may help you continue to explore personal interests and values with your student:

- www.viacharacter.org - free character strengths evaluation
- www.kevan.org/johari The Johari Window tool allows individuals to draw on feedback from friends and family members in order to create a personality map
- www.lifevaluesinventory.org Inventory assessment identifies student's values and provides tools to explore careers and educational majors aligned with each value (financial prosperity, concern for others, independence, etc.)

Exploring Personal Interests

A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS

Learning Objective:

The student and mentor will identify and share their favorite things.

Instructions:

Read through the list of favorites categories with your student. As you read each one, identify your favorite and then ask your student to identify theirs. As you compare favorites, try to identify common interests. Try to find out why these things are your student's favorite and share why your favorites are what they are.

- Book
- Song
- Movie TV
- Show
- Friend
- Color
- Season
- Movie Star
- Holiday
- Place to Be
- Thing to Do
- Car
- Toy/Game
- Sport to Play
- Sport to Watch
- Food
- Music
- Artist

This activity is a great way to get to know each other a little more. You may find that you share some favorite things. Finding common ground will strengthen your relationship with your student. Based on your similarities, create a pretend outing or pretend dinner that you would both enjoy. Where would you go? What would you eat? What music would you play? Who would you invite?

Exploring Personal Interests

WHAT MAKES ME TICK?

Learning Objective:

The student will explore personal values, interests, and experiences.

Instructions:

Read the phrases aloud and ask your student to orally complete them with the first idea that comes to mind.

- If I had a week-long vacation, I would...
- On weekends, I wish my family would...
- If I had \$10, I would...
- I think my parents should...
- The thing that scares me the most is...
- People I like always...
- I cry when...
- I am afraid to...
- I am happy when...
- I am proud that I...
- When I grow up, I want to be...
- In my spare time, I like to...
- The most important quality in a family is...
- I like people who...
- Five years from now, I would like to...
- I would like to travel to...
- I would like to make a difference in the world by...
- I am really good at...
- I get angry when...
- My friends think I am...
- I am loneliest when...
- In school, I do my best when...
- I feel the most love when...

Choose a response to a phrase discussed above that caught your attention and encourage your student to elaborate on their answer.

personal growth and development

Setting Realistic Goals

S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

Learning Objective:

The student will gain an understanding of setting goals.

Instructions:

When setting goals, it is important for your student to understand the steps necessary to attain them. These objectives will help them on their path to reaching their goals.

Goals: what you would like to achieve

Objectives: how you will reach your goals

An example of a goal would look like this:

I, John/Mary Smith, will attend XYZ College in the fall of 20__ and obtain a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice.

Specific

Consider writing a goal that is specific, clearly defines what you want, and answers the questions: Who? What? Where? When? and Why?

Measurable

Establish concrete criteria for measuring your success and progress. To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions like, "How much?" "How many?" "How will I know when I have reached my goal?"

Achievable

Create a realistic path to achievement that includes action steps and objectives. Your goals should push you past your comfort point; however, you should be able to attain them with determination and commitment.

Relevant

Consider what the purpose of achieving your goal is. Your goals should be important to you and the outcome should impact your life.

Timely

Use actual numbers, target dates, or specific events to indicate when your goal will be achieved.

Review the S.M.A.R.T. goal setting tips and assist your student with writing a goal and listing some objectives that will help them reach their goal.

personal growth and development

Setting Realistic Goals

I HAVE S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

Learning Objective:

The student will create goals for different aspects of their lives.

Instructions:

Students will have goals for different aspects of their lives. Work with your student to create a S.M.A.R.T. goal and outline the steps they will take to achieve it. Remember to clarify the difference between goals and objectives. A goal is what they would like to achieve and the objectives are the steps your student will need to take in order to achieve their goals. Take notes as you and your student are discussing the information below.

My S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Goal

Objectives

My Goal: _____

Type of Goal (check one): Academic Career Personal

Specific (Who, What,

Measurable (How much/many): _____

Achievable (Steps I'll

Relevant (Important because): _____

Timely (I will achieve

Refer back to this activity periodically to monitor your student's progress in reaching their goal. Your student can continue to use this activity to set new goals.

personal growth and development

Building Positive Values

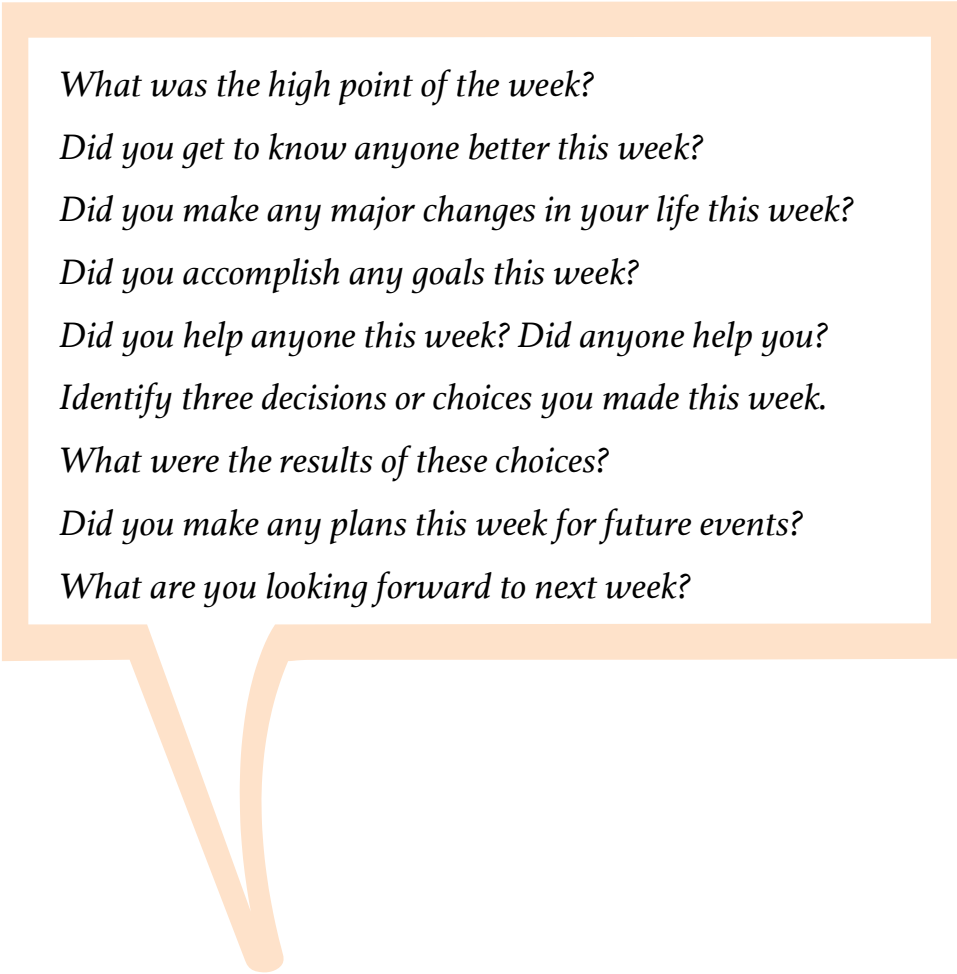
What's Going Well?

Learning Objective:

The student will reflect upon their week's activities and gain insight on savoring positive experiences.

Instructions:

Use the discussion questions below to identify positive aspects about your student's progress. Explore ways to overcome any challenges they may have faced in accomplishing their weekly goals.



What was the high point of the week?

Did you get to know anyone better this week?

Did you make any major changes in your life this week?

Did you accomplish any goals this week?

Did you help anyone this week? Did anyone help you?

Identify three decisions or choices you made this week.

What were the results of these choices?

Did you make any plans this week for future events?

What are you looking forward to next week?

“Negativity Bias” causes people to be much more likely to notice and remember negative experiences. Help your student identify some positive experiences each week.

personal growth and development

Building Positive Values

What WOULD YOU DO?

Learning Objective:

The student will gain a basic understanding of bullying.

Instructions:

You can visit these websites for more information and advice on bullying:

- <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schooladventures/health/cruelschools/>
Discover solutions to managing anger, getting help, and stopping violence.

- bullyingstatistics.org

Information on preventing bullying, harassment, violence, online bullying, and school bullies.

Equipping students with the tools they need to feel safe in school will provide a better learning environment for them. Discuss possible solutions to the scenarios below with your student.

Shaquanda always sits alone at lunch; others sometimes throw things at her.

Juan is hit or punched by another student at his locker every day.

You just heard of a plan for a big fight on the bus. There might be a weapon involved.

Melania and Jessica wrote a song with mean lyrics about another girl; they plan to sing it in the talent show.

Section 2: Supporting Academic Success

The activities in this section will allow you to learn how to get help for your student in specific subject areas and enable you to teach your student important organizational and academic skills. Your student's College Success Coach is a great source of information about your student's current academic status as well as resources available in the school and community. **Your goal as a mentor** is to assist your student in higher scholastic achievement through the use of proven strategies and techniques.

Resource List:

On the Take Stock in Children website (www.takestockinchildren.org) you will find additional activities you can complete with your student as well as resources and research that you may find helpful. Look for activities supporting:

- Homework
- Note-taking
- Speed Reading

The following websites may help you continue to explore academic skills with your student:

- ***khanacademy.com*** Learn for free about math, art, computer programming, economics, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, finance, history, and more.
- ***funbrain.com*** Educational activities & games for students
- ***familyeducation.com*** Mentors can use this site to learn more about adolescent issues. Students can use it for academic purposes.
- ***powa.org*** Instructional site for students who want to learn how to improve their writing skills

Improving Academic Skills

IDENTIFYING YOUR STUDENT'S NEEDS

You can get a fairly clear picture of your student's school performance by reviewing their progress reports and report cards, both present and past. You can obtain these from your College Success Coach. These reports have information such as absences, tardies, unexcused absences, suspensions, grades, and effort. Many reports also include specific comments and recommendations made by your student's previous teachers.

FOR THE MENTOR

Below are some recommendations to identify your student's specific academic needs.

Obtain your student's progress report and/or report card.

Compare academic progress from one grading period to the next. Look for trends in achievement, attendance, and conduct. As you look over the report, ask yourself a few questions: Is there a problem with attendance or conduct? Is the student always prepared for class? Is adequate progress being made? Are my student's grades what they should be? If there are areas where improvement is needed, address these with your student.

Pay close attention to your student's grades on an ongoing basis.

Grades are the key performance indicators for your student. Waiting for a report card can sometimes lead to a challenging situation to resolve. Students who have below a 2.0 grade point average are underachieving. We want our students to perform at the highest possible level in order to be prepared to succeed in college.

Consult with your College Success Coach and school liaison.

If you notice a marked drop in your student's academic progress or grades, the first thing you should do is share your concern with your *Take Stock in Children* College Success Coach. Your College Success Coach can assist in arranging a parent-teacher conference to address the question of your student's needs.

Plan to participate in a parent-teacher conference.

The parent-teacher conference is intended to inform parent(s)/guardian(s) about their child's progress and to address concerns about poor performance, but it can accomplish a great many other things with proper leadership. It is important that both the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student attend this conference. Students need to hear that their performance might jeopardize their chances of receiving a scholarship or succeeding at the college level and what steps they can take to improve their grades. Parent(s)/guardian(s) should be told what they can do to help their child succeed in school. Feel free to share your contact information with your student's teachers. It will show that their student has a strong support system and will allow the teachers another point of contact for the student.

Improving Academic Skills

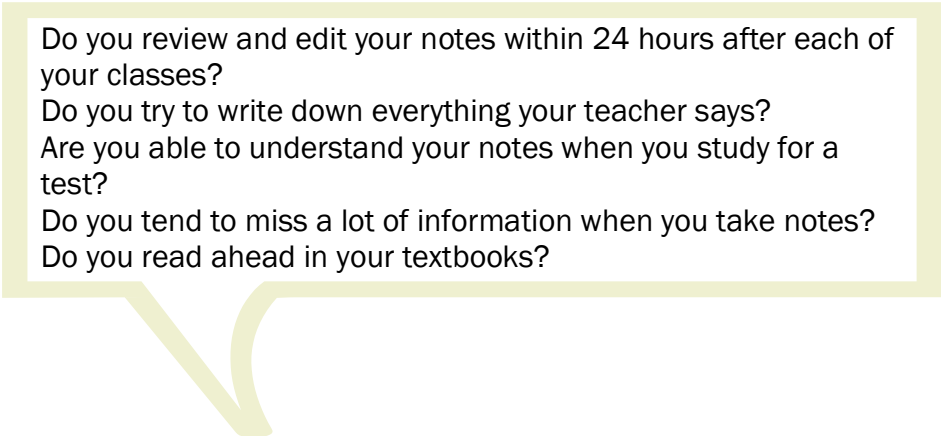
THE TRICK TO NOTE-TAKING

Learning Objective:

The student will evaluate their note-taking habits and review some note-taking tips.

Instructions:

Effective note-taking is important for students to retain information learned in class. Use the discussion questions below to determine whether your student is taking effective notes.



Do you review and edit your notes within 24 hours after each of your classes?
Do you try to write down everything your teacher says?
Are you able to understand your notes when you study for a test?
Do you tend to miss a lot of information when you take notes?
Do you read ahead in your textbooks?

Use the tips below to help your student improve their note-taking habits.

Be selective. Avoid trying to write down every word or writing in complete sentences.

Abbreviate. Reduce common words/phrases to symbols and eliminate connecting words like: is, are, was, the, and would. Drop the last few letters of words; e.g., “approx” for “approximately.” Try using “formula” statements to take notes. For example, the teacher says, “The diameter of the earth is four times greater than the diameter of the moon.” You write, “Earth=4x>diameter of moon.”

Focus on the main points. Use “significance” statements. Identify main concepts and state why they are important. If the information being given is important, a speaker will usually do one of the following: pause before or after an idea, use repetition to emphasize a point or write an idea on the board.

Identify significance. Ask yourself, is the information being discussed new or is it covered in the text? You can do this by looking over the class assignment prior to class. To be successful, make sure you are a step ahead and have a working knowledge of the topic.

Ask questions. Make sure you clarify areas that are unclear or confusing.

Reference examples. Concrete examples are often the best way to clarify complex ideas.

Review notes ASAP. The sooner you review your notes, the better you retain the information.

Improving Academic Skills

TEST TIME!

Learning Objective:

The student will become familiar with different types of test-taking strategies to use when studying.

Instructions:

There are many different types of tests: essays, true/false, and multiple-choice to name a few. Knowing how to study for them can help your student sharpen their test-taking skills. Review the various test preparation tips below with your student.

General test prep tips:

- Concentrate on learning what you do not know
- Ask your teacher for help, if necessary
- Anticipate the questions
- Create a study outline
- Ask questions
- Make a test schedule

Essay Tests

Keep Track of Your Time If you have five questions to answer in 40 minutes, for example, make sure you do not spend too much time on any one question.

Read Through the Questions Once By familiarizing yourself with all the questions first, you will have much more time to consider your answers.

Identify the Directive Words Read the directions carefully and pinpoint the key terms. If a teacher wants you to describe, then do so; if she wants you to evaluate, then do not worry so much about description.

Outline Your Answer First Teachers are greatly influenced by the coherence and structure of your answer. To list facts in random order makes it seem as if you do not have a clear grasp of the material. Try to organize your answers as well as you can.

Take Time to Write an Introduction and Conclusion A strong introduction and conclusion are essential parts of a good essay. They give your responses the structure of logical arguments.

True/False Tests

- Look for any word in the question that could make it false.
- Look out for extreme modifiers that tend to make a question false: all, none, never, only, etc.
- Identify qualifiers that tend to make questions true: usually, frequently, often, probably, etc.

Multiple-Choice Tests

- Read each question with the intention of answering without looking at the possible answers.
- Use educated guessing: Eliminate two choices quickly and then decide between the remaining two.
- Choose the numbers that are in the middle range, not the extremes, when guessing.
- When in doubt choose answers that are longer and more descriptive.
- When two similar answers appear, one is likely correct.

Section 3: College Readiness

Your student should begin to plan for college in high school. Your goal as a mentor will be to use the following activities to assist your student in monitoring their progress toward post-secondary enrollment. The activities are designed to help your student become familiar with the many aspects of the college transition process.

Resource List:

On the Take Stock in Children website (www.takestockinchildren.org) you will find additional activities you can complete with your student, as well as resources and research that you may find helpful. Look for activities supporting:

- High School vs. College
- Campus Tours
- State Colleges
- FAFSA
- Florida Prepaid

The following websites may help you continue to explore college readiness with your student:

- <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/estimate> Allows younger students to use a FAFSA4Caster calculator to estimate what financial aid they're eligible for based on current family income
- fafsa.ed.gov Source for FAFSA preparation and filing
- navigatingyourfinancialfuture.org Information about FAFSA completion assistance at locations across Florida
- fastweb.com Free scholarship search
- floridashines.org Self-directed college and career search

Preparing for College

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

Learning Objective:

The student will gain an understanding of the college application process.

Instructions:

Review the “Do’s and Don’ts for College Applications” with your student. Help your student become familiarized with a college application using one from the college they wish to attend.

Do....

- Read all directions carefully.
- Apply online, if possible so you are less likely to make careless errors.
- Have someone read and proofread all parts of your applications to avoid typos.
- Use your essay as a chance to show admission officers your unique interests and qualities beyond academic skills.
- Include anything that makes you stand out from the crowd, such as honors, awards, or special talents.
- Review your high school transcript before you send it to colleges, making sure that it accurately reflects your courses, activities, awards, and grades.
- Find out if the college accepts special materials, such as a sample of your artwork.
- Make copies of everything you send.
- Submit application and supporting documents prior to due date/deadline.
- Keep track of when and where you send material (i.e. transcripts, application, essay)

Don't....

- Procrastinate
- Lie or exaggerate with any information you provide
- Leave out important details. For example, if you play in the school band, include what instrument you play.
- Submit a sloppy application
- Borrow ideas for your essays, whether from a friend or website.
- Go over the college’s length limit for an essay. Admissions officers have limited time and many essays to review.
- Forget to follow up once your application is sent. Write “thank you” letters to counselors, teachers, friends, or family who provided you with letters of recommendation.

To get additional tips and resources visit <http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org> and follow the “Get In” link to the “Apply 101” section.

college readiness

Preparing for College

COLLEGE APPLICATION

Learning Objective:

The student will gain an understanding of the basic information required to complete a college application.

Instructions:

Applying to college can be an overwhelming process for students. Below is a list of what a college application generally includes. Review this with your student and help ease their concerns about the application process.

What You Will Need to Apply:

Students can apply to college in writing or online. Many college websites have easy-to-understand application instructions.

Application Forms:

A college application fee is approximately \$30. Some colleges charge up to \$60 and others do not have any application fees. This fee is usually non-refundable, even if you are not accepted. Many colleges offer fee waivers for applicants who demonstrate financial need. If you need a fee waiver, see your guidance counselor or your *Take Stock in Children* College Success Coach.

High School Transcript:

This form is filled out by an official of your high school and can be sent in both paper form or electronically. If it comes with your admissions materials, you should give it to the guidance office to complete as early as possible. Some colleges send this form directly to your school after receiving your application.

Admission Test Scores:

Many colleges require you to submit SAT or ACT test scores because they are a standard way of measuring a student's ability to do college work. When you complete your applications for the SAT and/or ACT, you can select the institutions to where you would like your results sent.

Letters of Recommendation:

Many private colleges ask you to submit one or more letters of recommendation from a teacher, counselor, or other adults who know you well. When asking someone to write such a letter, be sure to do so well before the college's application deadline, as it may take some time for those you asked to write their letters.

Encourage your student to research what the specific requirements are at the schools they are considering attending.

Financial Aid

THE BASICS OF FINANCIAL AID

Learning Objective:

The student will gain a basic understanding of the different forms of funding for college.

Instructions:

Review the information on funding for college with your student.

As a *Take Stock in Children* scholar, you have a Florida Prepaid Tuition Scholarship upon graduation. Whether your scholarship is for 2 years or a 2+2, it will only cover tuition and will not fund the additional costs of attending college, like fees, supplies, dormitories, etc. It is important for you to educate yourself on other forms of funding for college in order to maximize your financial aid dollars.

The Basics

Grants- A grant is money awarded to a student that does not have to be repaid. It is usually based on financial need.

Scholarships- Scholarship money can be awarded because of academic achievement, outstanding talent or skill, and/or financial need. This money does not have to be repaid.

College Work-Study- If you plan to work while in college, it is wise to explore work-study because any money earned will not count against you on your FAFSA application the following year.

Loans- Loan monies are awarded to students on the condition that they are repaid within a specific amount of time.

Local Awards- High schools, churches, local businesses, and civic groups often sponsor financial programs that target talented students with demonstrated financial need from schools in their areas. Ask your guidance counselor about any local scholarship opportunities.

Detailed Information on Types of Funding for College

- Log on to studentaid.ed.gov for detailed information on grants, scholarships, and more.
- Click on “Federal Student Aid Programs” on the left-hand navigation bar.

Links include:

- Grants
- Campus-Based Aid
- PLUS Loans for Graduate and Professional Degree Students
- Stafford Loans
- PLUS Loans (Parent Loans)

Remember: Make sure that you know the deadlines for financial aid on your applications! Learn more about funding for college by visiting floridashines.org and selecting “Go to College” and then “Pay for College.” You can also visit knowhow2go.org or fafsa.ed.gov for more information on financial aid and the FAFSA.

Section 4: Career Readiness

Discussing careers can be a very rewarding experience for you and your student. Using the career exploration tools in this section can be a great way for mentors to get their students motivated and excited about the future. Help them recognize education as a pathway to their personal success. *Your goal as a mentor* is to provide your student with practical information about working in the community. Sharing your “real world” experiences with your student will help prepare them for the world of work.

Resource List:

On the Take Stock in Children website (www.takestockinchildren.org) you will find additional activities you can complete with your student, as well as resources and research that you may find helpful. Look for activities supporting:

- Career Exploration
- Workplace Knowledge

The following websites may help you continue to explore careers with your student:

- monster.com/career-advice Enables students to research careers
- careeronestop.org/toolkit Employment trends and projections, salary guides, and career exploration tests.
- <http://www.bls.gov/k12/students.htm> Occupational Handbook for students
- floridashines.org Career information linked to majors, interests, skills

Career Exploration

IS SCHOOL A REAL JOB?

Learning Objective:

The student will discover how skills learned in school are needed in the work force.

Instructions:

Using the chart below, ask your student to explain how each skill is used at school. Discuss how these skills will be used in the workplace.

<i>Skill</i>	<i>How This Skill is Used at School</i>	<i>How This Skill is Used at Work</i>
Meeting deadlines		
Expressing yourself orally		
Expressing yourself in writing		
Being dependable		
Remembering		
Listening		
Working independently		
Taking notes		
Writing in an organized manner		
Organizing		
Making decisions		
Solving problems		
Working as part of a team		
Negotiating		
Being motivated		
Leading others		
Arriving on time		
Personal appearance/hygiene		
Initiative		

Many skills learned in school transfer right to the workplace. Use this opportunity to share how you use these skills in the work that you do.

career readiness

Workforce Readiness

WAYS TO GAIN WORK EXPERIENCE

Learning Objective:

The student will learn about the different ways to gain work experience.

Instructions:

Gaining work experience can come in many different forms, from job shadowing to volunteering. Visit the website provided below and review the information with your student.

JOB SHADOWING - jobshadow.com

Job shadowing includes spending time observing someone who is in a position of which you would like to learn more. This site provides information on what job shadowing is as well as

contacts for those who are interested in participating in a job shadow program. Let your Guidance Counselor know that you are interested in job shadowing to find out more about opportunities your school or community may have.

PART-TIME JOB

Part-time jobs are convenient for students, giving them the opportunity to work a few hours after school, on the weekends, or even during the summer. A part-time job should not interfere with your studies. Speak with your guidance counselor to find out more about part-time jobs that may be available to you.

VOLUNTEER PROJECTS - volunteermatch.org

Volunteer projects are a great way for you to build a strong record of achievement, community service, and leadership. Students who volunteer for a wide variety of community projects will be exposed to many different types of business and civic organizations. You will also meet community and business leaders who can assist you in your future careers. This site is a resource to find more information about volunteer opportunities in your community.

You can get more information about opportunities for work experience from:

- Your school
- Your school's Guidance Department
- Local Chamber of Commerce
- Civic and business organizations
- Your College Success Coach

Remember a small investment of time and effort can be a very important component of a resume and is valued by employers. Participation in volunteer projects, job shadowing, and a part-time job demonstrates:

- A good work ethic
- A sense of community responsibility
- Good character

Gaining valuable work experience is vital to your student's future. As they go through the various websites, discuss with them the information they find most helpful.

Workforce Readiness

HOW TO APPLY FOR A JOB

Learning Objective:

The student will gain an understanding of the job search and application process.

Instructions:

Help your student understand the job search and application process by reviewing the information below. Use this opportunity to share your own professional experiences with them.

Step 1: Find a job that interests you

In today's world, jobs are listed in a variety of ways: Internet job sites, ads, on the web, classified posts, on school campus and company websites. Start your search using one of these methods and keep a list of the positions that interest you.

Step 2: Inquire about the position

Once you have selected a job or two that are of interest to you, proceed by contacting the company/ organization and inquiring about the position. Is the position still open? Is there an application to complete? To whom can you forward your resume and cover letter?

Step 3: Provide the potential employer with your cover letter and resume.

Remember that your cover letter and resume are a reflection of who you are, so make sure they have been proofread and are free of errors. Generally, the potential employer will call you to arrange an interview. If you do not hear from them, take the initiative to call and inquire.

Section 5: Road Map

The activities in this section are designed to help your student with their educational planning for each year in middle and high school. Such planning includes identifying the right courses to take and preparing for standardized tests. **Your goal as a mentor** is to assist your student in tracking their progress toward high school graduation and their college and career goals.

Resource List:

On the Take Stock in Children website (www.takestockinchildren.org) you will find additional activities you can complete with your student, as well as resources and research that you may find helpful. Look for virtual tours of FL colleges, as well as resource videos that will help you support your student throughout middle and high school.

The following websites may help you continue to help your student prepare for high school graduation:

- **collegeboard.org** and **act.org** College and career exploration, alongside test prep and college readiness information
- **FSassessments.org** Information about Florida's standardized tests
- **floridashines.org** Academic advising, career readiness, and distance learning resources for FL students
- **floridastudentfinancialaid.org** Academic requirements for Florida Bright Futures and other scholarships
- **fldoe.org/academics/graduation-requirements** Academic advisement for Florida students is published each year; students are always held to the requirements which were current in their 9th-grade year

road map

Planning for High School Graduation

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Learning Objective:

The student will create an outline of the courses they will need to complete to stay on track for high school graduation.

Instructions:

Students are required to complete a certain number of courses on their road to high school graduation. You can find this information at fldoe.org/academics/graduation-requirements. In order to ensure that your student is on track for graduation, assist them with outlining their course plan. Use the chart below to note the number of credits your student needs to earn in each subject area, and courses they may wish to take each year to meet the requirement.

ROAD MAP TO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Subject area	Required Credits	Freshman Course(s)	Sophomore Course(s)	Junior Course(s)	Senior Course(s)
English					
Mathematics					
History/Social Studies					
Science					
Art					
Foreign Language					
Physical Education/Health					
Electives					

Keep this list in a safe place and refer back to it annually. This will be a good way for your student to ensure that they are on the right path toward high school graduation.

road map

Planning for High School Graduation

CHECKLIST: FRESHMAN YEAR

Learning Objective:

The student will follow the recommended suggestions for college/career bound freshman.

Instructions:

Review the “Checklist” with your freshman student. Keep a copy of this list in a safe place and allow them to check off each task as they complete it.

- Create a GPA goal
- Choose a club at school
- Start working on your community service hours
- Create a high school resume and include your awards, achievements, paid and/or volunteer work, extracurricular activities, classes taken, fluent language(s), and technical skills
- Explore career options
- Start preparing for the PSAT
- Begin studying for the FCAT

Review this list on occasion to ensure that your student is on track.

This checklist gives you a general sense of what your freshman student should be doing this year. Take Stock in Children College Success Coaches use a more specific version of this checklist with current dates, local dates and deadlines included. Contact your student’s CSC for a copy of this year’s Freshman Checklist.

road map

Planning for High School Graduation

CHECKLIST: SOPHOMORE YEAR

Learning Objective:

The student will follow the recommended suggestions for college/career bound sophomores.

Instructions:

Review the “Checklist” with your sophomore student. Keep a copy of this list in a safe place and allow them to check off each task as they complete it.

- Take PSAT
- Print out HS graduation requirements
- Begin thinking about an internship experience or career shadowing opportunity. (what, when, where)
- Inquire about: AP, dual enrollment, virtual, the requirements for high school graduation, college admissions, Bright Futures scholarships
- Begin to research colleges, college fairs, summer program offerings at colleges
- Use the FAFSA 4Caster to estimate the amount of need-based financial aid you'll be eligible for
- Narrow down top colleges and universities to coincide with your interested area of study
- Research standardized tests and requirements of these top schools
- Update HS resume w/ awards, achievements, clubs
- Participate in college tours when possible

This checklist gives you a general sense of what your sophomore student should be doing this year. Take Stock in Children College Success Coaches use a more specific version of this checklist with current dates, local dates and deadlines included. Contact your student's CSC for a copy of this year's Sophomore Checklist.

Planning for High School Graduation

CHECKLIST: JUNIOR YEAR

Learning Objective:

The student will follow the recommended suggestions for college/career bound juniors.

Instructions:

Review the “Checklist” with your junior student. Keep a copy of this list in a safe place and allow them to check off each task as they complete it.

- Take as many AP and Dual Enrollment classes as you can comfortably take pertaining to a proposed major. Be sure to consult with a college advisor and high school counselor.
- Take PSAT/NMSQT
- Sign up for SAT/ACT
- Deeper dive into college/university list of requirements for application; i.e., ACT, SAT scores, essays, letters of reference
- Schedule SAT/ACT; begin preparing for test
- Create scholarship planner
- Update HS resume w/ awards, achievements, work experience, and leadership roles
- Continue to set and work towards GPA Goal
- Continue to earn and record volunteer/community service hours
- Participate in college tours, and research summer program offerings at colleges
- Summer; start filling out college applications. If you qualified for an SAT/ACT fee waiver, you will receive application fee waivers as well.

This checklist gives you a general sense of what your junior student should be doing this year. Take Stock in Children College Success Coaches use a more specific version of this checklist with current dates, local dates and deadlines included. Contact your student’s CSC for a copy of this year’s Junior Checklist.

road map

Planning for High School Graduation

CHECKLIST: SENIOR YEAR

Learning Objective:

The student will follow the recommended suggestions for college/career bound seniors.

Instructions:

Review the “Checklist” with your junior student. Keep a copy of this list in a safe place and allow them to check off each task as they complete it.

___ Take as many AP and Dual Enrollment classes as you can comfortably take pertaining to a proposed major. Be sure to consult with a college advisor and high school counselor.

___ Sign up for SAT/ACT

___ Update HS resume w/ awards, achievements, work experience, and leadership roles

___ Continue to set and work towards GPA Goal

___ Early decision deadline, October 1

___ Explore schools’ application process. Look at their applications, essay/biographical requirements, average GPA, exam requirements, recommendation requirements, etc.

___ Check out the virtual tours at websites of any colleges you are interested in attending.

- Log-in with them as this will get them to mail or email you additional information.
- If you feel very strongly about 1 or 2 schools, consider applying for early admission.
- Be sure to have your scores sent to every school you may want to attend. Your scores will be updated every time you retake an exam, and this will get you on their mailing list

___ Practice writing essays

___ Senior photos

___ Apply for Bright Futures and other scholarships

___ Attend FAFSA workshop and apply

- ___ Attend college orientation workshop
- ___ Register for Take Stock in Children's Alumni Alliance
- ___ Get to know the top 2 schools that you applied for; meal plans, dormitory, landscape, administrative buildings, bookstore, student union, etc.

This checklist gives you a general sense of what your senior student should be doing this year. Take Stock in Children College Success Coaches use a more specific version of this checklist with current dates, local dates and deadlines included. Contact your student's CSC for a copy of this year's Senior Checklist.



For additional mentor resources and to access an electronic version of the Mentor Toolkit, please visit our website at www.takestockinchildren.org/resources/mentors