

# College Readiness Curriculum

## Lesson 1

### Introduction and Goal Setting

#### Lesson Overview:

Students will begin the College Readiness Curriculum by completing the following steps: 1) viewing and discussing an introductory slideshow 2) creating a personal College Readiness Timeline 3) setting personal goals for success in preparing for college

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# College Readiness

## Lesson 1 – Introduction and Goal Setting

### Lesson Overview:

During the first part of this lesson, you will introduce the concept of college readiness by presenting and discussing a slideshow that lays out the steps and elements of college readiness. With your feedback, students will then make their own personal College Readiness Timelines.

During the second part of the lesson, students will discover how to set and meet short-term goals in order to achieve long-term and life goals. With your guidance, they will choose short-term goals for the next year that will make students stronger candidates when applying for colleges and/or help them succeed in their future academic and professional careers.

### Time Frame:

2-3 hours

### Core Concepts:

- Creating a College Readiness Timeline ensures that students understand what college readiness entails and have a plan to implement necessary steps and actions.
- Setting a series of strategic short-term goals is an effective way to achieve life goals.

### Lesson Objectives:

In this lesson students will:

- Identify the essential steps and actions they must take to prepare and apply for college.
- Create a timeline for completing those steps and actions.
- Identify their biggest challenge(s) in the college application process.
- Develop SMART Goals to increase their college readiness.

### Materials Needed:

- [College Readiness Overview Slideshow](#)
- Worksheet 1: College Readiness Timeline
- Worksheet 2: Assess Where You Are
- Worksheet 3: SMART Goal Setting Chart

### Supplemental Videos:

- [Intro to College Readiness](#)
- [Steps to Get into College](#)
- [Goal Setting](#)

## Part 1: Introduction

### Step 1: Activate Background Knowledge

Ask for a show of hands to find out how many students have a sibling or older friend who is in college or has graduated from college. Then introduce the College Readiness Module by asking students a series of questions designed to elicit what they already know or believe about preparing for and applying to post-secondary schools. As volunteers respond, jot their responses on the board.

Ask:

*How long ago did your sibling/friend start college?*

*What do you think are the most important things to consider when getting ready for college? (Invite both students who know someone in college and students who don't to respond.)*

*What kinds of people in your life do you think would be most helpful as you wade through college websites and mailers?*

Spend a few minutes discussing students' responses. Point out that while many of their answers are good, the answers don't give the full picture of what's involved in preparing for college. And even if students have a sibling or friend who has gone through the process, things may have changed in the years since that happened. Then assure students that they don't need to worry — this course is designed to introduce them to everything they need to know and do to become college-ready!

### Step 2: Present the Slideshow

Present the College Readiness Overview slideshow, pausing after each slide to allow students to ask questions and make comments. (Suggestions are provided after some slides.) Clarify anything that students don't understand. If students express concern about their ability to complete some steps of the college preparation process, remind and assure them that each lesson in this course will allow them to focus more deeply on and plan and prepare for specific steps and phases of the process.

*[NOTE: The college readiness process can vary tremendously from university to university and from country to country. The following information presents general steps in the process. You might wish to tailor the information to make it more specific and relevant to your students.]*

[Slide 1]

College Readiness Steps – Academic Preparation

Some college admissions processes include secondary school grades and achievements. Others do not. Whether your high school grades are considered for college admission or not, your study skills WILL play a role in how well you adjust to university academics and how successful you will be in

your college classes. Consider what you will need to do to achieve and maintain academic success over the next few years.

[Slide 2]

#### College Readiness Steps – Academic Preparation Recommendations

Consider the following steps and decisions you might need to make in order to prepare academically during secondary school:

- Grades – take your studies seriously, prioritize study time, stay focused
  - ✓ During every academic school year look for ways to improve grades, such as tutoring
- Study Skills – look for ways to make your study time efficient and effective
  - ✓ Do so as soon as possible and then practice, practice, practice
  - ✓ Look for more information in Lesson 6: Study Skills
- High School Program/Track/Classes
  - ✓ Many schools and regions/countries offer International Baccalaureate, honors, Advanced Placement, and other advanced classes, programs or schools.
  - ✓ Some countries may require that you choose a study or career track during, or even before, secondary school.
  - ✓ Consider when *you* need to make decisions and enroll in particular academic programs, classes and schools.
  - ✓ Choosing more advanced classes and schooling options can often make you a stronger college applicant – especially when grades are an important consideration.

*Pause to Ask: In which of these areas do you feel confident you're on the right track? In which do you think you might need to do better?* Suggest that students make notes for themselves throughout the slideshow so that later, they can discuss area of concerns with you and otherwise investigate ways to improve.

[Slide 3]

#### College Readiness Steps – Rounding Out Your Experience

In addition to academics, extracurricular activities and out-of-school activities can help make you a more desirable candidate when applying to post-secondary schools. Even if they are not considered in the application process, these activities can give you an opportunity to explore career interests.

Non-academic activities can help you to de-stress and recharge so that you are ready to focus on your studies when you need to. Try to participate in one or more of the following:

- Summer job
- Internships
- Volunteering Opportunities
- Clubs
- Athletics/sports
- Hobbies

*Pause to Ask: What activities do you currently do that might look good on a college application? What activities might you begin or advance\* in between now and when you apply for college?*

*\* For example, if a student is already on the student council, s/he might consider running for an office.*

[Slide 4]

College Readiness Steps – Family Discussions and Expectations

In order for *you* to be ready for college, your family must be ready for you to attend college, too.

Consider when you will discuss the following topics with your family:

- Expectations
  - ✓ Do they expect you to attend post-secondary school?
  - ✓ Do you have the same expectations about the details such as when you will attend, where you will go (or stay), what you will study?
  - ✓ The sooner you bring this up, the more time you have to align your expectations.
- Finances
  - ✓ How will you pay for your education?
  - ✓ Do your parents have resources or plans?
  - ✓ What are your options?
- Decisions
  - ✓ As you make decisions related to your secondary and post-secondary education, keep the lines of communication open with your family.

[Slide 5]

College Readiness Steps – Building Your Support Team

In Lesson 2 you will build a “College Readiness Team” of people who can help support and guide you through the process.

If you are two or more years away from college, you may want to continue to add to your College Readiness Team as you meet people who can help you.

*Pause to Ask: Did anyone immediately come to mind? If not, don't worry —you'll figure it out during the next lesson. But if you did think of people, jot down their names.*

[Slide 6]

#### College Readiness Steps – Researching the Options & Making Final Decisions

Decisions about where to attend college and what to study will require research and can begin early. Consider the following steps (that you may or may not have already accomplished):

- Research or determine career options
  - ✓ Lesson 3 can help, if you have not already done this step. It is never too early to consider your career options.
- Research post-secondary school options
  - ✓ Have a small list of schools by the time you begin your final year of high school.
  - ✓ Lesson 4 will help you get started or continue your search.
  - ✓ If possible, visit schools to which you definitely plan to apply or those schools where you have been accepted.
- Decide
  - ✓ If you have been accepted to more than one school, you will need to make a final decision.
  - ✓ Complete Lessons 5 for advice and activities to help you with the decision-making process.

[Slide 7]

#### College Readiness Steps – Entrance Exams

Depending on where you plan to attend college, you may need to take entrance exams. Entrance exams can vary greatly in terms of content, requirements, expectations, and timing. To be fully prepared, you will need to determine the following details:

- *When* to register for and to take the exam(s)
- *What* to study
- *How much time* studying will require
- *If and when* to take a test prep class or form a study group with other students
- *When* you will receive the results
- *If and when* to retake an exam, if possible

- To find out more about the exams required in your country or for the schools in the country you hope to attend post-secondary school:
  - ✓ Conduct an internet search
  - ✓ Talk to your school guidance counselor, university admissions officers, or others who have taken the exams
  - ✓ Lesson 6, Study Skills, includes tips and additional information about studying for entrance exams.

*Pause to Ask: Has anyone registered for or taken an entrance exam? Invite a few volunteers to share information about dates and locations, and any study and preparation tips they might have.*

[Slide 8]

#### College Readiness Steps – Applications

College application processes vary from university to university and country to country. In order to be prepared, research the application process for the schools that interest you most. If necessary, prepare for the following steps:

- Get organized – Don't miss any steps
  - ✓ Learn more in Lesson 7
  - ✓ Keep track of due dates
  - ✓ Keep track of application requirements
- Admissions essays – *Not required for all universities*
  - ✓ Learn more in Lesson 7
  - ✓ Be sure to practice writing skills throughout your secondary school education
- Admissions Interviews – *Not required for all schools*
  - ✓ Prepare an “elevator pitch”
  - ✓ Keep informed on current events

[Slide 9]

#### College Readiness Steps – Financing Your Education

The cost of post-secondary school can range from paying for materials and a few small fees to tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars, pounds, or Euros. In order to be prepared financially, consider the following:

- Estimate the cost for each school
- Find out what, if anything, your family can or is willing to contribute
- Consider a college savings plan
- Research Financial Aid (Learn more in Lesson 8)

- Seek out and apply for scholarships and financial aid offered by universities and governments
- Consider other options – a job, less expensive colleges, accelerated high school programs that award college credit, etc. (See Lesson 8 for additional ideas.)

[Slide 10]

#### College Readiness Considerations – Making the Transition to College

Consider what you will need to do to prepare for the changes to your life and lifestyle that might accompany this transition.

- Complete enrollment paperwork and paying fees/tuition
- Decide where to live and make moving arrangements (if necessary)
- Get a job (if necessary)
- Prepare to be more self-reliant
- Attend orientation/welcome events

*Pause to Ask: What did your older sibling and friends find most difficult about the transition? What did they enjoy most?*

#### Step 3: Students Complete Timeline

(30 to 60 minutes)

Explain that just as it can be hard to find a new place without a map, it can be hard to achieve a new goal without a plan. The first step for students in developing a college readiness plan is to create a timeline. It will serve as a “map” that students can follow to get where they want to go: Post-Secondary School!

Distribute Worksheet 1: College Readiness Timeline. As needed, review the College Readiness Overview slides with students. Then encourage them to complete first drafts of their timelines.

Schedule a few minutes to meet with each student and review her or his timeline, using the following questions to guide discussion:

- Are there important tasks missing from the student’s timeline?
- Are there any tasks that should be clarified or removed?
- How should the student prioritize the tasks on the timeline?
- What was your own experience like when you applied for college? Do you have useful tips and ideas to share with the student?

- What other questions and concerns does the student have?

Finally, ask students to revise their timelines according to your feedback.

## Part 2: Goal Setting

### Step 1: Students Complete Self-Assessment

(Approximately 30 minutes, including students' independent work)

Begin the goal-setting section of this lesson by getting a sense of where students are in the college preparation process. Invite each student to complete Worksheet 1: Assessing Where You Are, either in class or as homework.

When students have submitted their worksheets, set aside a few minutes to meet with each student individually to provide feedback on the worksheet, being sure to do the following:

- Discuss appropriate next steps for each student.
- Identify and discuss steps of the process that are particularly challenging to the student. Offer guidance and suggest appropriate resources to help students complete these steps.
- Identify students who are lagging behind in or struggling with the overall college preparation process. Guide these students to outline plans for catching up. (This may require scheduling a longer meeting outside of class.) Direct students to resources and activities that will help them progress in the process.
- Discussing your own personal tips for success in preparing for post-secondary school. What worked for you? What do you wish you had done differently?

### Step 2: Introduce SMART Goals

Point out that now that students have assessed where they are at present, it's time to set and work toward future goals. Explain that SMART Goals is a strategy that can be used to set and achieve short-term goals. Even if students have mostly long-term goals in mind, they can use the SMART Goals strategy to break down their long-term goals into smaller, approachable SMART Goals.

Point out that SMART is an acronym that describes guidelines for goal setting. Display the following list of guidelines and go through them with students:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable

- Relevant
- Time bound

Then discuss briefly what each guideline means:

#### S – Specific

In order for students' goals to be specific, students must clarify their focus and priorities. Share the following self-check questions and example to guide students in setting specific goals:

- What do I want to accomplish?
- Why is this goal important?
- Who is involved?
- Where is it located?
- Which resources or limits are involved?

Example Goal: *Be more organized*

Example SMART Goal: *Starting this week, I will use my school planner to record and organize all of my schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and responsibilities for each day. As I become aware of each new event or due date, I will record it in my school planner. For 10 minutes each afternoon right after school, I will review the calendar and plan out my afternoon and evening accordingly.*

#### M – Measurable

Explain that measurable goals help students to track their progress. Point out that students' goals should address questions such as the following:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know when this goal is accomplished?

Example goal: *Apply to colleges*

Example SMART Goal: *By December 15, I will complete the online application for my top 5 college choices.*

#### A – Achievable

Tell students that their SMART Goals should be achievable and realistic. For example, if someone has no access to a piano, then learning to play the piano is not an achievable goal. Point out that

*achievable* goals are not necessarily *easy* goals. Students should set challenging goals that stretch students' abilities. Guide students to consider the following self-check questions when setting achievable goals:

- How can I accomplish this goal? What effort will be required?
- How realistic is the goal based on constraints such as cost or availability of resources?
- Who determines whether this goal is met? *Beware of setting a goal over which you have little power or control.*

Example goal: *I will meet all the admissions requirements for my first-choice school/program.*

Example SMART goal: *From now until the day of the college entrance exam, I will set aside 30 minutes each evening and 4 hours each weekend to study, in order to improve my chances of achieving the score requirements of my first-choice school/program.*

#### R – Relevant

Remind students that their smaller, short-term goals should act as steps to achieving their larger, long-term goals. Guide students to keep the big picture in mind as they set their SMART goals, using the following self-check questions to make sure their goals are relevant:

- Does this goal seem worthwhile? Why?
- Is now the appropriate time to work on this goal?
- How does this goal support my larger goals for post-secondary school and the future?

Example: *If your longer-term goal is to improve your score on a college-entrance exam, taking a test-prep course is a relevant shorter-term goal. If you are fairly satisfied with your exam scores, but concerned about your college résumé, your time might be better spent joining a new club, doing volunteer work, or taking on a leadership role in one of your current activities.*

#### T – Time-bound

Explain to students that they should set a target date for achieving each SMART goal, in order to help them stay focused on and assess their progress toward long-term goals. Encourage students to use the following self-check questions to be sure that their goals are time-bound:

- When will I do this?
- What do I need in order to do this?
- What can I do today?
- What can I do a month from now?

- What can I do a year from now?
- What is my plan for completing this goal if I miss my initial target date?

Example goal: *I will improve my grade in calculus.*

Example SMART Goal: *I will meet with a math tutor once a week for the entire semester in order to improve my grade from a C to at least a B.* (This goal might be made along with related goals regarding study time, regular meetings with the calculus teacher and/or completing additional problem sets as homework.)

### Step 3: Review and Identify Needs and Concerns

(15 minutes)

Ask each student to review Worksheet 1: College Readiness Timeline and Worksheet 2: Assess Where You Are. Post the following list of questions for students to consider. Ask them to take notes on their responses.

- What worries you most about completing the college application process?
- What steps do you need to take in order to be well prepared for a college entrance exam?
- What are you most worried about in terms of preparing for or taking college entrance exams?
- Do you have any tasks to complete this year or next year that could be stated as SMART goals?
- Do you have larger tasks to complete that will require you to achieve one or more smaller goals along the way?
- What do you hope to accomplish this year in terms of preparing yourself for post-secondary school? How will you get there?

### Step 4: Set SMART Goals

(30 minutes)

Distribute the Smart Goal Chart. Direct students to use their notes (worksheet) from Step 3 and complete the chart by setting and recording three or four SMART Goals for themselves for the next week, month, six months or year.

### Think-Pair-Share

(10-15 minutes)

If time permits, ask partners to share and give feedback on each other's SMART goals. Encourage them to revisit the SMART goal definitions as they discuss and determine whether their goals are truly "smart"; i.e., are the goals specific and measurable? Are they achievable, relevant and time-bound? Direct partners help each other revise their goals as necessary.

Finally, ask each pair to share a SMART goal with the class. Then invite a student from another pair to explain why the goal is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

#### Step 5: Discuss and Revise SMART Goals

Set aside a few minutes per student to meet with students and discuss their SMART Goal Charts. Use these questions to help guide discussion:

- Have students included all of their achievements? Have they missed anything important in their self-assessments of the college application or exam preparation process?
- Do students' SMART goals fit the guidelines? Will the goals help to students move forward?
- Are students concerned or in need of clarification about anything?

Guide students to revise their SMART Goals based on your feedback and direct them to update their College Readiness Timelines as appropriate.

#### Resources for Learning More

Share the following ideas and resources with students who want to learn more.

#### In-person Resources:

- Leaders, mentors, advisors, and supervisors from extracurricular activities and jobs.
- Older siblings, family members or friends who have navigated the process
- School guidance counselors
- Teachers
- Admissions counselors at universities/colleges that interest you
- University websites

#### Online Resources

- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/?affiliateId=stdlp&bannerId=bf-logo-default> (US)
- <http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/universities/applying-to-university-and-ucas-deadlines/> (UK)
- [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) (US)
- <http://www.usnews.com/education> (US)
- <https://www.studyineurope.eu/> (EU)
- <http://www.uac.edu.au/undergraduate/> (Australia)
- <http://www.universia.net.mx/> (Mexico)

- <https://www.universityadmissions.se/en/All-you-need-to-know1/Finding-out-more/Application-timeline-and-checklist/Autumn-semester-timeline-and-checklist/> (Sweden)
- For other countries and additional information in the countries above, conduct an online search.