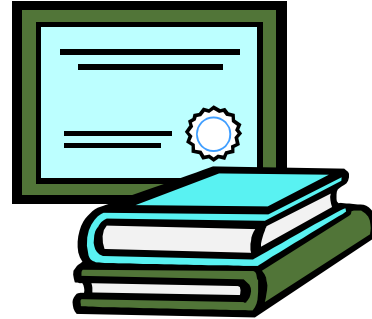


Step 2: Cooperatively establish high school and college objectives and plans

“Learn from the Past – Live for the Present – Plan for the Future.”

..... *Thomas S. Monson*



In this step you and your child will develop a plan for the type of diploma your child should work toward. You will start working on the classes he or she should take and any tutoring or remedial work needed. You need to consider a career, specific jobs, the type of postsecondary school, and the specific school and location. Plans should be made for the ACT/SAT test and cooperatively working with the guidance counselor. A financial plan is in order, as well as mentally, physically, and emotionally preparing to leave home. (I must admit that the most difficult thing that I have found to do is to get my own children to follow this advice. They either want to learn the hard way by reinventing the wheel or procrastinating. However, in the end they did come around and apply most of these principles.

Make copies and keep copies of all applications and forms used in high school.

The place to start

This step will concentrate on first, high school plans, and secondly, college plans. Objectives come before plans. What are your child’s talents, interests, abilities, and realistic outlook on life? Start here and build around the present status of each of each of these. The following are the common sources for career ideas:

- Student’s interests
- Parents’ interests and advice

- Guidance Counselor's ideas
- Local testing
- Take the ASVAB during the junior year (more on this later)
- Other (list them)

By the time my second son was 16 he had developed an interest in weight lifting, track, football, and life guarding. The result: it all ended up in bodybuilding. He won the teenage Kentucky state bodybuilding championship at age 17 and placed in the top 10 in the national teen competition at age 19. At 19 he was already a certified personal trainer, health nutritionist, aerobics instructor, and certified lifeguard. I encouraged him all the way and shared some of the costs involved. Quite a feat for someone so young.

High school plans are important

Today's high school student has more educational opportunities than ever before. Students and parents can choose from public schools, private schools, home schools, online schools, GED, or a combination of these. This step assumes you will choose public schools. Our first three children attended public schools and a daily class at a church school. Our youngest attended the first half of the ninth grade at a public school and the second half as a homebound public school student. He was home schooled his last three years, attended a daily class at a church school, and attended a local community college part-time during the same period.

Work with your youth and guidance counselor to choose first-the type of diploma, second-classes each year, third-school activities. Let your kids know what you think his or her talents are and the strengths they possess. Be careful about going over their limitations – youth may work hard to prove you are wrong.

There does not seem to be standardized diplomas from state to state on a national basis. Be sure to check carefully for your own area. Some types of diplomas and programs may not be well known by the public and you may not be aware of their usefulness. In our state diplomas generally come under 4 categories (varies with the school system):

- Standard Diploma – Sets forth the minimum requirements to graduate
- Precollege – Provides basic course work for college admission
- Honors – Contains advanced classes for specific needs and college
- Commonwealth – College preparation plus 4 advanced placement classes

The diploma must match the career plans and the college/university your child plans to attend. Although it is not necessary to choose a college as a freshman in high school, it helps. Your youth or family may already have a school in mind. If not, then go to one of these helps:

- Guidance counselor at high school
- Guidance counselor at colleges
- Friends whose children had similar interests as yours
- Magazines and E-zines: search on line
- Websites found at the end of this step

Be actively involved in choosing classes each of the four years. Make sure you register on time, or early if possible, to get the classes desired. Obtain a thorough understanding of the classes that meet the diploma criteria. Sometimes students choose classes that their friends are taking, that are popular, are easy or some other reason that really won't work.

The level of difficulty is an important factor to consider. There are the regular classes, gifted and talented classes, advanced placement (AP) classes, and others to choose from. Testing scores and the guidance counselor will help place your child in classes that are appropriate for him or her and for the diploma sought. Don't go over their heads or below their abilities. If you have done a good job with step 1, your child can select classes that will "stretch" abilities. It is worth saying here that far too many seniors choose "easy" classes to get higher grades and scholarships. This may very well backfire because the classes won't properly prepare the student for the ACT/SAT exams or college/scholarship admission.

During your child's junior year consider having him or her take a national standardized assessment called the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). Don't worry – it has nothing to do with enlisting in the military or serving Uncle Sam. It is one of those under-used ways to help determine career interests and natural skills that may not be picked up with other forms of testing. Check with your guidance counselor and learn to use the results effectively.

Be selective in choosing school-related activities. All scholarships ask about part-time work during high school, involvement in community, civic, and church service. The granting organizations will also ask about awards received, leadership positions held, and extracurricular activities. You need to allow time in the family schedule for participation in a **balance** of these endeavors to prepare your youth to receive mucho dollars.

Clubs, sports, and band are the major activities available at school. Some of them double as community service while others are primarily on-campus activities. The scholarship folks are looking for direct involvement where students serve as officers, although a busy group member is worthwhile. Here are some national and local groups your student can become affiliated with:

- Beta Club
- Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA)
- Future Business Leaders of America
- Future Farmers of America
- Future Teachers of America
- JROTC
- Key Club
- Math Club/Team
- School/Student Government
- School Yearbook and Newspaper
- Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA)

Community, civic, and church service adds a lot of points to the scholarship score sheet. Typical examples include:

- Boy Scouts (builds leaders)
- Church Youth Group
- 4-H Club
- Girl Scouts (builds leaders)
- Junior Achievement
- Red Cross
- United Way

Sports and band build discipline, organization skills, teamwork, stamina, and character. These two activities take up much of a student's time. We feel it is best to limit involvement to activity in only one sport or one band. Some students find it possible to participate in two seasonal sports that won't conflict or two bands that don't overlap. Being in both band and sports at the same time is very challenging. Provide some personal guidance here. Remember to leave time to study, work, and have fun. One of our children was overly active in high school. This child stayed stressed out much of the time by being in four musical/band groups and studying to make Valedictorian of the senior class. Although a person can have strong will power and self-discipline, we (or school leaders) can over do it.

Choose a college or university carefully

The traditional approach to choosing a college is to find one that has a good program for your child's major and that is affordable. You want to make sure there is a "good fit" between student and school so that your child can thrive and survive the course work, culture, activities, and part-time jobs. This comparison is much like the fit between employee and job/employer. With more than 2,500 four-year schools in the United States, this can be a challenge.

We recommend choosing between 6 and 12 community colleges/universities, apply, enroll, and see who gives the best "deal." It is imperative that your student choose, apply to, and enroll in the schools in a **timely** manner, and all online work or paperwork be filled out **completely and accurately**. If this is not followed the process will be delayed, your student may be given a lesser financial aid package, or denied admission. Comply with or beat all early decision and admission deadlines for best results.

Here is another approach:

**Choose the "best" Professor in the field
and go there to study.**

Consumer reports on colleges are available in print form or on the Internet. Friends, family, part-time jobs, and interests may call for a college close to home. We have such wonderful freedoms in America that we can literally pick among hundreds of institutions for a general education. Sometimes the program your student chooses limits and determines the school. This was the case with my oldest son who wanted to be a genealogist – not only be accredited and certified – but also have a bachelors degree in family history/genealogy. He had few choices, and the one he made was a good one for him, was Brigham Young University. He excelled in a program that began as a personal interest for him at age eight. Where did he get his start? From his dad and mom. By age eight he had memorized about nine generations of our ancestors on a pedigree chart and when we would visit relatives, I would ask him to recite some ancestors. They thought it was cute, but he took it seriously and this led him to a really good job right out of college.

It is also advisable to write, call, email, and visit campuses to learn all you can about them. Let your child keep the school(s) updated on the progress he or she is making in preparing for and attending the college/university. If your child is planning to attend the same college one or more of the parents attended, be sure to let the school officials know. Students are more apt to be admitted and perhaps receive a scholarship when this is made known very clearly. **Praise** the school and **ask** for what you want.

An important question to answer here is, “How much planning, leading, and doing should the student be in charge of and how much should the parent(s) be in charge of”? We believe the general scope of this book is especially helpful for the single parent.

Keep in mind the type of job and occupation the diploma and degree will lead to. Check out the Occupational Outlook Handbook at www.bls.gov/oco. Each state should have a site to list colleges/universities/private schools and their respective majors and costs. For Kentucky check www.kheaa.com/pub_kygi.html.

If your child wants to **attend a college or university outside the United States**, you must research eligibility, the application process, and financing. Things will be quite different than what you are used to – so **start early**. Our oldest son was accepted into a university in England where he could continue his specialized studies in British local history and genealogy in a Masters degree program. He searched and applied for numerous financial aid packages **well in advance** of completing his undergraduate degree. Disappointment followed disappointment, until one day he was notified he would receive \$10,000 in scholarships from the institution. (U.S. schools don't give scholarships for graduate students). Combined with his part-time job and loan he made it through the graduate program.

WORKSHEET

Ask yourself the following 3 questions and provide a short, simple answer.

- ❖ 1. How will we select the right career interests for my child's education?
- ❖ 2. What are the appropriate diploma, classes, and activities for my student?
- ❖ 3. We need to decide soon on the best college or colleges. Our plans are:

Answer to 1.

Answer to 2.

Answer to 3.

Reflect upon what you just wrote and thought about.

Now expand upon what you just wrote and thought about.

How will you apply these ideas differently to be more successful?

Don't stop now – this is just the beginning. Read on and check out the websites.

Websites to open: www.bls.gov/oco
 www.kheaa.com/pub_kygi.html
 www.collegeboard.com
 www.collegezone.com
 www.mapping-your-future.org
 (home school) www.keystonehighschool.com
 (home school) www.heritagehomeschool.com