



# The Road To College

Students have big goals for themselves: 94% want to attend college, but currently, only half of California students graduate high school with the requirements to go to a public state university. That gap between students' dreams and the education they're getting is even wider for low-income students of color. This guide for parents tells you how to make sure your child is on track by supporting your child at home and advocating to make sure their school is preparing them for success.





## EARLY YEARS



### Start talking

Studies show that one of the most powerful things parents can do is interact with, read to, and talk to their babies a lot. Hearing lots of words builds children's brains, setting them up to thrive in school.



### Go to a high-quality preschool

Experts agree that children who go to preschool with experienced staff and a stimulating environment are better set up for success in kindergarten and beyond. Studies show that the effects of preschool and early literacy can be seen for years - all the way to high school graduation!



### Don't miss school!

Missing school means missing out on learning. One of the most important things that parents can do is make sure their child is at school and ready to learn. Starting as early as kindergarten, missing school may cause students to lag in third grade reading. By eighth grade, students who miss school more than twice per month are over seven times more likely to drop out.

## ELEMENTARY

### Focus on mastering math

Colleges want students who have gone as far as they can in math—reaching classes like calculus and Statistics by senior year. To get there, eighth-graders should be proficient in integrated math in eighth grade, which is the foundation for everything else. In past years, students have been taking a class called "Algebra 1" in eighth grade. Under California's new standards, the skills and concepts of algebra are spread across both eighth and ninth grade so the classes might now have different names. What's important is to be on track for geometry at the start of high school.



## MIDDLE SCHOOL



### Be on grade level in all subjects by the start of middle school

Transition years, when students move to a bigger school, often with new classmates, are particularly crucial. In sixth grade, students often move into a bigger school, and the pace of instruction accelerates.



### Read and do math at grade level by third grade

This is a critical point when students go from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." If students aren't strong readers by this point, they'll start missing out on learning across all subjects. Students who aren't on grade level in reading in third grade are four times as likely to drop out of high school.



### Make sure you are really on track

Being on grade level doesn't just mean passing classes and moving on each year. The annual state tests (CAASPP) are an important tool for checking whether students have mastered what they are supposed to have learned at each grade. Make sure your child meets or exceeds standards on the test.

### Keep your grades up

School isn't supposed to be easy. Success comes to those who take on big challenges, work hard and persevere. Getting good grades is how you prove to others that you not only have school smarts, but a strong character and work ethic.



### Be at grade level by the start of high school

High school is a lot more challenging and students have a full course load with little time to catch up. Be ready from day one!



### For students that are learning English

Get reclassified within 3-5 years: Schools should get all English learners (ELs) fluent in English within five years so that they can advance on grade-level in all subjects. Otherwise, ELs can fall behind and have trouble taking the classes they need to be college-ready. All EL students take the ELPAC test each year to measure fluency and their progress towards learning English. Districts and schools have different policies for deciding when to reclassify students based on this test, CAASPP scores, the teacher's assessment, parents' input and other tools. Every school also has an English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) where you can learn more and give input.



### Go above and beyond: take the most challenging classes

Colleges look for students who don't just meet requirements, but push themselves – getting grades of A or B in required classes, pursuing extracurricular activities and taking the most challenging courses available. If you have a choice of an honors class, take it. Don't take a free period – take another academic class or elective. Explore extracurricular activities you are passionate about. College classes are hard, so the more you push yourself, the better prepared you'll be.

## HIGH SCHOOL



### Excel in all 15 A-G required courses and maintain a 3.0 GPA

To be eligible for a 4-year state university, students must take 15 specific A-G required courses and pass them with a grade of "C" or better. Not all classes count toward A-G. Low-income students, EL students, and students of color are less likely to attend a high school with A-G approved courses. At the start of high school, ask your counselor for a 4-year plan with the required classes at each grade and make sure you stay on it.



### Take and pass several AP or IB classes and exams

There's no better preview for what will be required in college than AP and IB classes. In fact, if you pass the exams at the end of the year, you not only have a stronger college application, but can receive college credit, saving you time and money!



### Take the Pre-SAT (PSAT) in tenth grade

Nearly all colleges require not only good grades, but for students to do well on either the SAT or ACT. Start preparing early by taking the PSAT practice exam. Your counselor can help you sign up. Colleges look at this exam to get in touch with promising students. College scholarships are available to those who do well.



### Prepare for the SAT/ACT and earn a score of 1300 or better on the SAT or a score of 24 or higher on the ACT

Research has shown that students who meet these scores are more likely to go to college and do well in college. There are lots of books and classes that can help you prepare for the test.

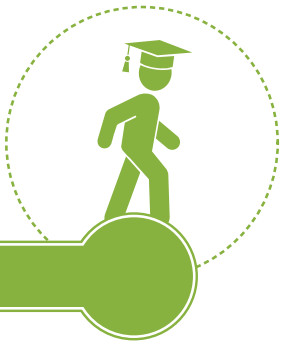


### Apply to competitive, four-year colleges and financial aid

Students do best when they attend more competitive schools. That's why it's important to apply to more than one school, including a few "reach" schools, where you're not sure if you'll get in. Check in with your counselor often – there are many scholarship and application fee waivers available. It's important to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to be eligible for grants, loans, and work study financial aid opportunities.



## GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL



# LAUNCH INTO HIGHER LEARNING

Learning doesn't end when you graduate from school. An excellent education teaches not what to know, but how to learn. Most 21st century careers require education beyond high school whether a credential program, a college degree or even a PhD. Working hard in elementary, middle and high school means you will have lots of options for the next phase of your life!

## What classes do you have to take to be eligible for a California state university?

To be eligible for a CSU or UC, students must pass all 15 of these A-G courses with a grade of C or better.

	Course	# of Years
A	History/social science	Two years: One year of world history, cultures and historical geography, and either one year of U.S. history or a semester of U.S. history and a semester of American government or civics.
B	English	Four years of college preparatory English that integrates reading of classic and modern literature, frequent and regular writing, and practice listening and speaking.
C	Mathematics	<p>Three years of college-preparatory mathematics including or integrating topics covered in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elementary algebra</li> <li>• Advanced algebra</li> <li>• Two- and three-dimensional geometry</li> </ul> <p>Also acceptable are courses that address the above content areas, and include or integrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trigonometry</li> <li>• Statistics</li> </ul>
D	Laboratory science	<p>Two years, providing fundamental knowledge in two of the following disciplines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biology</li> <li>• Chemistry</li> <li>• Physics</li> </ul>
E	Language other than English	Two years of the same non-English language.
F	Visual and performing arts	One year chosen from dance, drama/theater, music or visual art.
G	College-preparatory elective	<p>One year of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An additional approved "a-f" course beyond the minimum required for that subject area,, or of a course that; or</li> <li>• A course that combines any of the "a-f" subject areas in an interdisciplinary fashion</li> </ul>