

**Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program**  
**Diploma Project Toolkit**

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**A Guide for Pennsylvania Students**

*October 2018 (Revised)*



**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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Please see Companion Document

Parent Guide - Road to College and Career

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# Diploma Project Toolkit

## Introduction

The *Diploma Project Toolkit* is a handbook created to assure success for migrant students in earning a high school diploma and making a smooth transition to career or postsecondary education.

The *Diploma Project Toolkit* is designed for use by the Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program (PA-MEP) in conversation with migrant students and their families and with input from the school counselor and others. It includes practical guidelines for setting academic and career goals, planning a course of study based on the high school credits and courses required by the local school and district, preparing for exams, and finding a suitable postsecondary program.

The *Diploma Project Toolkit* is divided into four student units, which may be used in any order depending on student goals/needs. There is a companion parent unit document, translated in ten languages. Each unit provides information, tips, and a culminating activity for review of the unit. Each unit also provides an action plan that encourages students to apply their new knowledge. PA-MEP staff are advised to introduce the Toolkit as early as possible in a student's high school career, starting with the transition from 8<sup>th</sup> grade into high school, and to use it as a reference whenever discussing a student's program and progress.

### **Section 1 – Goal Setting**

### **Section 2 – High School Credits and Courses**

### **Section 3 – Tests and Test Preparation**

### **Section 4 – Career and Postsecondary Planning**

## Section 1: Goal Setting

How can I begin to identify my strengths, challenges, and desires?

### Goal Setting at a Glance:

This section is a launching pad for students who are beginning to think about education and career options after high school.

### Highlights include:

- Self-assessments for students to identify personal strengths, preferences, and challenges;
- Career options and resources;
- Importance of forming a “planning team” that includes mentors;
- Overview of paths that lead from high school to a career; and
- Examples of college preparation programs.

### Self-Assessment for High School Students

Begin planning for your future by identifying personal strengths you can build on, challenges you can manage or overcome, and long- and short-term goals that can guide you. Understand the steps that will open a path to achieve your highest academic and career goals. Use this checklist to track your progress in these areas:

#### Strengths / Assets

- I am able to do well in challenging classes.
- I prepare myself for required college/career assessments.
- I participate in school and extracurricular activities that match my talents and interests.
- I am willing to work hard and persist despite obstacles.
- I share my goals and dreams for the future with my parents, peers, or other mentors.
- I know where to seek help if I need it.

#### Challenges

- I spend a lot of time working at my job outside of school or with other family responsibilities.

- I am the first in my family to have a goal to go to postsecondary education or career training.
- I sometimes hesitate or do not know where to get help.
- I have not figured out my college/career plans after high school.
- I am not sure what courses I need to take to graduate from high school.

### **Planning Ahead**

- I keep track of and document all of my achievements and honors as a student.
- I know about and am involved in college/career prep programs at my school.
- I ask my school counselor and/or Student Support Specialist about scholarships I could pursue.
- I search for scholarships and other sources of funding in different free web-based search engines.
- I explore a variety of career options that match my talents and interests.
- I ask my parents or other mentors what it's like to have and hold a job.
- I will or have spoken to my parents about transportation and living arrangements once I am ready to pursue postsecondary education or start a career.

### **Self-Assessment for Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Students**

Begin planning for your future by identifying personal strengths you can build on, challenges you can manage or overcome, and long- and short-term goals that can guide you. Understand the steps that will open a path to achieve your highest academic and career goals. Use this checklist to track your progress in these areas:

#### **Strengths / Assets**

- I am motivated to achieve my goal/dream.
- I prepare myself for pre-GED/HSED courses.
- I follow-up on my transcripts (if available).
- I am willing to work hard and persist despite obstacles.
- I share my goals and dreams for the future with my parents, peers, or other mentors.
- I know where to seek help if I need it.



## Challenges

- I spend a lot of time working at my job, which leaves little time to study.
- I am the first in my family to have a goal to go to postsecondary education or career training.
- I sometimes hesitate or do not know where to get help.
- I have not figured out my college/career plans.
- I am not sure what I need to do to get a GED/HSED.

## Planning ahead

- I keep track of my education history.
- I know where to look for sources of funding to pay for postsecondary education/career training.
- I explore a variety of career options that match my talents and interests.
- I keep track of my work experience and decide what would be applicable to further education/career.
- I have thought about transportation and living arrangements now that I am ready to pursue postsecondary education or start a career.

## Eight Grade Survey

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Survey School Year 20\_\_ to 20\_\_**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are your future plans?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| _____ Attend a Career Technical School                                 | _____ Join the workforce                |
| _____ Attend a technical school after high school<br>or in high school | _____ Attend college (2 year or 4 year) |
| _____ Join the military  | _____ Other                             |

2. Does any family member support your future plans?

3. What are some things you are really good at?

4. What are some things that are difficult for you?

5. What are your favorite classes in school?

6. What classes are more difficult for you?

7. What grade do you consider to be a good grade for you?

- \_\_\_\_\_ A
- \_\_\_\_\_ B
- \_\_\_\_\_ C

8. How important are your grades?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

9. Who do you go to for help with your classes? (Check all that apply)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Counselor     | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Migrant Staff   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tutor         | <input type="checkbox"/> Another Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other           |

10. What careers are you interested in?

11. Are you involved in any clubs, afterschool programs or extracurricular activities?  
If not, what would you like to be involved in?

12. Has anyone in your family attended college or technical school?

13. Who is the person(s) in your family that you respect the most and why?

14. Is there any additional information you wish to provide?

# Student Action Plan

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Strengths	Areas of Concern
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.

Goals	Steps	Target Date
1.	1.	
2.	2.	
3.	3.	
4.	4.	
5.	5.	
6.	6.	

Are You There Yet? Checkup	Dates
<b>Checkup 1</b>	
<b>Checkup 2</b>	

**Suggestions after meeting with my SSS / Counselor.**

<b>Goal 1</b>
<b>Goal 2</b>

---

Name Date

---

Student Signature Date

---

Student Support Specialist Date

---

Parent Signature Date

**To be filled out by Student Support Specialist**

**Academic Progress.** Based on the student interview the following interventions may be considered during the school year.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> After School Program         | <input type="checkbox"/> After School In-Home Tutoring            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Tutoring                | <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Community Program               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> District Tutoring Program    | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Referral Screening Process           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Intervening Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Out of School Time / Work Ready Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other                        |   |

**Comments:**

**Career Exploration** Based on the student interview it is recommended that they be referred to the following programs/organizations that develop career interests, aptitudes, and abilities.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Girl Scouts              | <input type="checkbox"/> Boy Scouts         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4-H                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational Program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Big Brothers/Big Sisters | <input type="checkbox"/> Upward Bound       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brain STEM               | <input type="checkbox"/> Camp Connect       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job Shadowing            | <input type="checkbox"/> Talent Search      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other                    |   |

**College Visitation** The student will be given the following opportunities to experience a college campus.

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Millersville (CAMP) | <input type="checkbox"/> Penn State |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other               |                                     |

**Comments:**

**Parent Conference:** It is recommended that the parents/guardian participate in the following activities.

_____	High School Orientation	_____	Open House
_____	Parent-Teacher Conference	_____	Other

**Comments:**

## What kinds of careers might I choose?

In the US, many students identify their long-term career goals during high school. If your career goals are clear, they should determine your course selection throughout high school. (For example, if you are interested in languages and would like to become a translator, you should take an extra language course or two in high school.) If you are not certain of which career you will choose, take courses in high school that will help you strengthen your skills and interests while you decide.

There are many tools available that will help you decide what kind of job/career you might wish to pursue after graduating from high school. Many students enjoy exploring the various options, however, they must be realistic. If mathematics is not your strength, for example, it does not make much sense to follow a path to becoming an accountant or bank manager.

Here are some free resources to help you identify which careers might be of interest to you:

- [123 Test](#)
- [Big Future](#)
- [Free Career Test](#)
- [O\\*Net \(English\)](#)
- [O\\*Net \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Practice Aptitude Test](#)

You may also seek help from the School Counselor and/or Migrant Education Student Support Specialist.

## What are the benefits of continuing my education after high school?

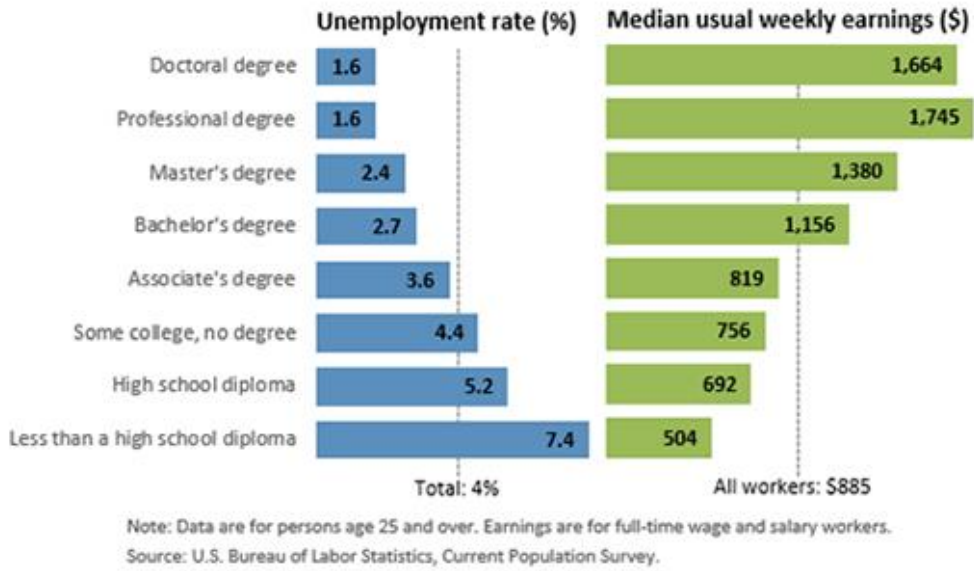
Are you thinking of leaving school to enter the workforce, so you can contribute to your family's finances? This decision has serious consequences for your future! Speak openly about your concerns to your school counselor, trusted teacher, and PA-MEP staff. They will help you find alternatives.

The chart below shows that a more advanced education results in higher earnings. A student who graduates from high school will likely earn far more per week than a student without a high school diploma, especially over the course of their lifetime. This proves the point that the decision to leave high school to enter the workforce has serious consequences.

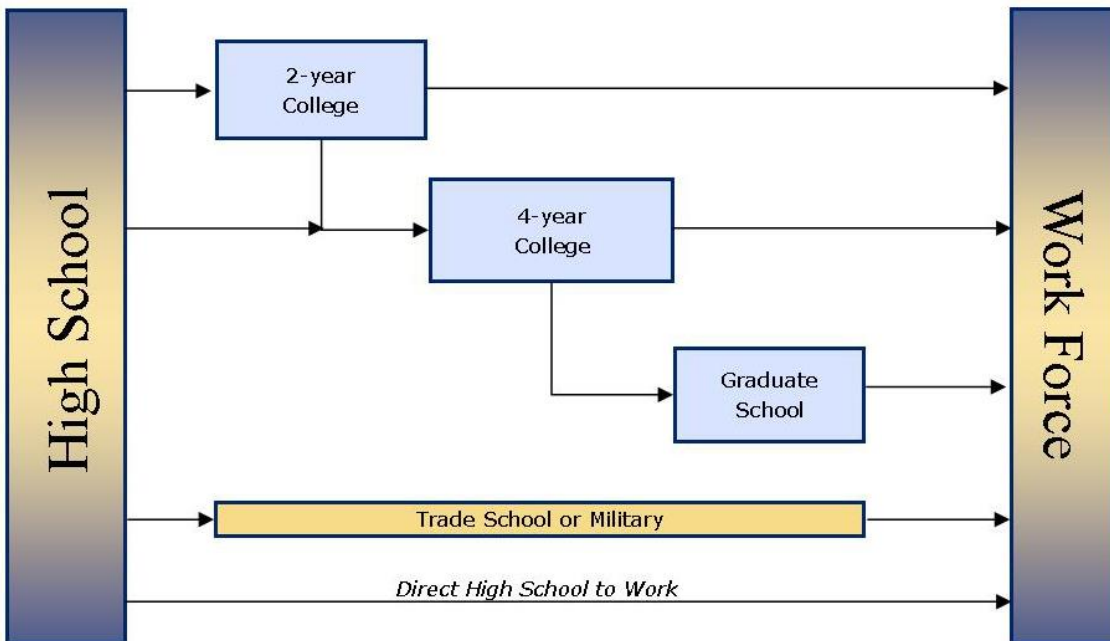
As shown in the chart below (most recent available), the more training/education, the higher the earnings a year throughout your lifetime.



## Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment, 2016



What are possible paths from high school to a career?



## Are college preparation programs available in my school or district?

There are many programs to help students succeed in high school and prepare for further education after graduation. These programs fall into two categories:

1. Many colleges invite high school students to live and study on campus during the summer break.
2. Student leadership academies help students build confidence and explore postsecondary options. One option is the Student Leadership Institute (SLI) available to high school students through the PA-MEP.

Ask your school counselor or MEP support specialist for more information about these programs. Here are a few that come highly recommended:

Name of Program	Who Is It For?	Summary (details below)
Educational Talent Search (ETS)	6 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> grade students	Identifies and supports students who show potential and the drive to pursue college education
Upward Bound (TRIO)	9 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> grade students	Helps students gain academic skills and motivation
College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)	1 <sup>st</sup> - year college students	Counseling, tutoring and workshops
Dual Enrollment	11 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> grade students	Earn college credit while attending high school

### Educational Talent Search

Educational Talent Search (ETS) is a federally-funded, pre-collegiate program that creates educational opportunities for low-income, first generation students while providing access to higher education and assisting in the transition to college. Educational Talent Search identifies and supports students in grades 6-12 who show potential and the drive to pursue a college education.

Students in ETS benefit from work on career exploration, academic and personal counseling, fun and educational field trips, and workshops on study skills, as well as a week-long summer enrichment program. See your school counselor to pick up an application. Eligible students are able to receive SAT/ACT and college application waivers. For more information, please go to the U.S. Department of Education website:

[Educational Talent Search \(ETS\)](#)

### Upward Bound (TRIO)

Upward Bound is a federally-funded TRIO program that serves low-income and/or first generation high school students with the overall goal to increase the rate at which participants complete secondary education and enroll in and graduate from institutions of postsecondary education. The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) are Federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The following are programs under the Upward Bound umbrella:

- Upward Bound (UB): The program provides opportunities for participants to succeed in their precollege performance and ultimately in their higher education pursuits.
- Upward Bound Math and Science (UBMS): The goal of the program is to help students recognize and develop their potential to excel in math and science and to encourage them to pursue postsecondary degrees in math and science, and ultimately careers in the math and science profession.
- Veterans Upward Bound (VUB): This program is designed to motivate and assist veterans in the development of academic and other requisite skills necessary for acceptance and success in a program of postsecondary education.

Upward Bound programs provide services and resources that include:

- Academic instruction in mathematics, lab sciences, English composition, and college preparation.
- Tutoring, counseling, mentoring, cultural enrichment, and services designed to improve financial literacy.
- Information and guidance on Federal Student Financial Aid.
- Assisting with secondary school reentry, alternative education programs, or entry into general educational development programs or postsecondary education.

UB and UBMS programs have two robust programmatic components:

- An academic year component that comprises of regular school visits to the target schools that center on academic progress, tutoring, and college-preparation.
- A six-week Summer Academy that simulates the college experience and prepares UBP students for success in their high school courses for the coming school year.

There are currently 18 Upward Bound, 6 Upward Bound Math and Science programs, and 1 Veterans Upward Bound program within Pennsylvania.

## **Dual Enrollment**

Dual enrollment programs are available in some school districts. These programs enable students to take college-level courses and receive both high school and college credits. Requirements for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders typically include: at least a 2.5 grade point average, demonstration of academic ability and motivation, and good attendance.

Check with your local school counselor to find out if this option is available to you. Typically, students that are in the AP courses are eligible. Migrant Student Support Specialist may also provide information on this option.

## College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)

The **College Assistance Migrant Program** at Millersville University (CAMP or MU CAMP) provides supportive and retention services to first-year university students from migrant and seasonal farm worker families. Supportive services include counseling, tutoring, skills workshops, financial aid stipends, health services, and housing assistance to eligible students.

For more information on the CAMP Program, go to Section 4, Career and Postsecondary Planning.

### Goal Setting – Culminating Activity

Write down some of your talents, skills, and interest.

Talents	Skills	Interests

Write down some careers or types of jobs that match your talents, skills, and interests.

Write down the names and contact information of the Planning Team who will help you to graduate from high school and plan for continuing education.

Planning Team Member	Name and Contact Information
School Counselor	
Trusted Teacher	
PA-MEP Staff	
Mentor	

Which paths to a career are you interested in knowing more about?

### Action Plan

Contact (by phone, note, or in person) your Planning Team to introduce yourself and let them know you will be in contact with them to discuss career options and the high school coursework required for graduation and beyond.

## Support Team for Students

Language Support	School	Local Community Agencies	Libraries, Recreation Centers, Faith-Based Org	Other Support Networks or Mentors
<p>Phone _____</p> <p>Language _____</p> <hr/> <p>By law, the school district must provide support to speakers of other languages. Parents need access to interpreters to participate in any school meeting or activity. This includes meeting with teachers, counselors, dean of students, and the school supports.</p>	<p><b>Teachers</b></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p><b>Counselor</b></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p><b>Principal/Dean of Students</b></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p><b>Migrant Staff</b></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p>	<p><b>Coordinators</b></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p><b>Case Workers</b></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p><b>Team Leaders</b></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p>	<p><b>Librarians</b></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p><b>Program Leaders</b></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p>When does the program start?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Name _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p>

## Section 2: High School Credits and Courses

### Section at a Glance

This section provides critical information about credits and courses that are needed to graduate from high school. It also gives helpful suggestions about the kinds of assistance that are available for students who are either missing credits and/or unable to keep up with their course work.

### Highlights

- Planning for credits
- Transcripts
- Where to get help (Ask your Student Support Specialist (SSS))
- Mentorship

### Keywords

**Credits-** You receive credits for each academic requirement that you pass.

**Credit Recovery-** The opportunity to make up credits if you fail a class.

**Elective-** A class you want to take because it interests you and can fulfill credits.

Course	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Credits
English	1	1	1	1	4
Mathematics	1	1	1	1	4
Science	1	1	1	1	4
Social Science	1	1	1	1	4
Foreign Language			1	1	2
Humanities	1	1			2
Electives			1	1	2
Health and Physical Education	.5	.5	.5		1.5
Other Graduation Requirements: Graduation Project, Service Hours and Keystone Exams				<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>

**How many credits do I need to graduate from high school? Which courses should I take to graduate from high school?**

Every school has different graduation requirements. Ask for information on the required credits and courses at your school. Then make a yearly plan that will lead to graduation.

**Sample of Graduation Requirements**

The earlier sample is typical of high schools in Pennsylvania. Your list of course requirements will look similar to this but be sure to find out your school’s exact requirements, so you can meet all requirements completely and on time. If you do not have easy access to this information through your school’s website, make an appointment with the school counselor. They are the best person to ask for this information

\*Ask your Student Support Specialist or school counselor about your school requirements.

**Transcripts and Foreign Transcripts**

If you have a diploma from another country, then it must be evaluated to make sure it is equivalent to a U.S. diploma. The school district should be able to evaluate the transcript. If the diploma is not equivalent to 12 years in Pennsylvania schools, then the individual, if under 21, could enroll in school or take the GED. This is only the case if the individual already graduated in their home country.

For more information see, Evaluating Foreign Transcripts Guidance, Appendix 1.

**If I am missing credits, what are some ways that I can make them up while I am still in school? If I am unable to keep up with my coursework and/or assignments, where can I find help?**

Sources of Extra Help		
<b>Community</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs offer homework, literacy, and leadership programs.</li> <li>• YMCA/YWCA offer after-school and evening homework help.</li> <li>• Many of Pennsylvania’s public libraries offer “Brainfuse” for free online homework help.</li> <li>• OnTrack- Free online college and career readiness program.</li> <li>• Educational Opportunities Center- Free help for college and career preparation.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Local Public School</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credit Recovery Programs</li> <li>• Individual homework and study skills tutoring</li> <li>• Online courses</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program</b> (where available)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer programs</li> <li>• After-school and Saturday programs</li> <li>• Help with earning credits</li> </ul>	<p><b>State/Federal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TRIO programs</li> <li>• GEAR UP</li> <li>• AmeriCorps</li> </ul>

Ask your Student Support Specialist or school counselor about your school requirements.

### **Who can help with planning my future?**

Successful students ask for help when they need it. It is not shameful to go to a knowledgeable person for help just as you would go to a book, brochure or website. Mentorships, internships and volunteer work are great ways to explore possible careers. We will focus on mentorship.

### **Mentoring**

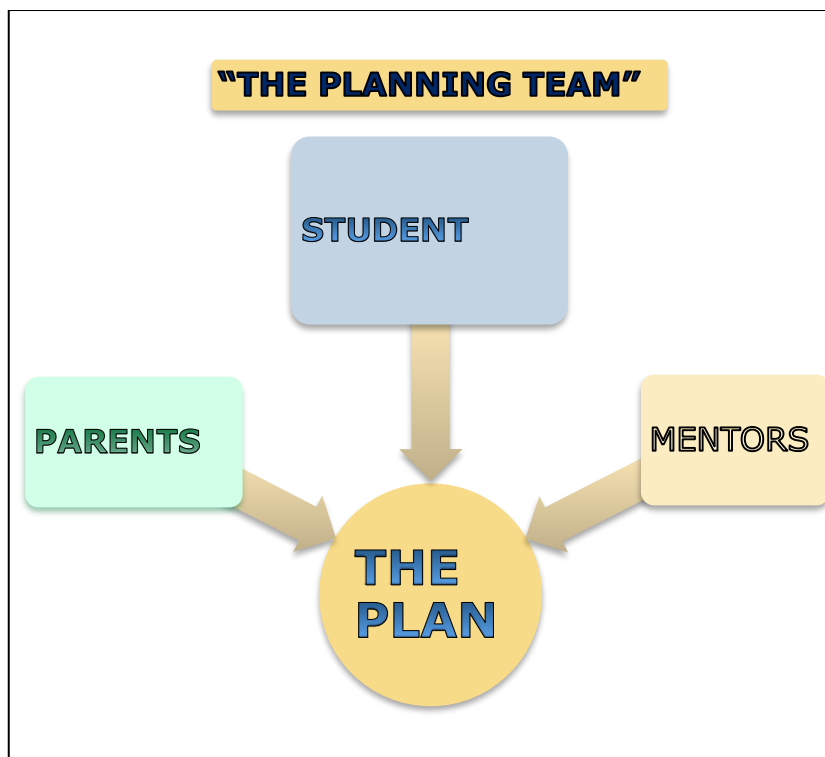
A “mentor” is defined as a “wise and trusted counselor or teacher” A mentor is your “go to” person when you need to discuss ideas or questions It is important for you to find a mentor. A mentor is someone who will guide and train you throughout your high school career. A mentor can be a peer, teacher, coach, school counselor or family member. Mentoring does not take the place of parenting. Be sure to keep your parents informed and involved in the process.

Here are some topics you might discuss with a mentor:

- What courses should I take to develop the skills I will need for success in my career?
- How did you (the mentor) prepare for your occupation?
- What does it take to be successful in any occupation?
- Who were some of the people who helped you along the way?
- Are there other people you think I should speak with?
- What can I gain in doing an internship?
- How do you balance your job with your family life?



- Can you recommend programs for students like me?
- What were some of the obstacles you had to overcome? Can you help me make an action plan?



## High School Credits and Courses

What is your school's telephone number?	
What is your school's website?	
Am I missing credits?	
What credits am I missing?	
What ways can I make up credits?	
How do I get involved in credit recovery programs?	

## Action Plan

Complete the table below with the courses and credits required for your high school graduation. Be sure to include other graduation requirements such as a senior project or community service hours.

Course	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Credits
Other Graduation Requirements				<b>Total</b>	

## High School Courses Action Planner

Use the chart below to create an action plan for your courses. Indicate your specific high school year.

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Courses of concern
Difficulties I am having with my courses
Where can I go for support?
My goal for improvement
Am I on track to reach my goal?

## Section 3: Tests and Test Preparation

### Section at a Glance

This section provides basic information about voluntary placement tests and school-mandated assessments. It also offers test preparation strategies.

### Highlights

List of tests for college/career
List of school mandated test
Test-taking strategies
Developing good study habits

## 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Voluntary Placement Tests

TESTS	PSAT Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test	SAT Scholastic Assessment Test	ACT American College Test	TOFEL Test Of English as a Foreign Language	ASVAB Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery
Grades	11th	11th & 12th	11th & 12th	12th	12th
Test Cost	\$16	\$45 No essay \$60 Essay	\$62	\$195	No Cost
Test Dates	Winter Spring Summer	Fall Winter Spring Summer	Winter Spring Summer	Winter Spring	To be determined by Military Recruiter
Test Content	Math Critical Reading Writing	Reading Writing Math	English Math Reading Science	Speaking Writing Reading Listening	Math Science Reading Electronics Mechanical
Test Purpose	Provides preparation for the SAT and used to qualify students for the National Merit Scholarship Competition	Measures readiness for college	Measures readiness for college	Assessment of language skills	To determine job classification / placement in the military

## School Mandated Assessments

TESTS	PSSAs PA State Standard Assessments	KEYSTONE	WIDA ACCESS Test
Grades	3 - 8	11	K-12
Test Cost	No cost	No Cost	No Cost
Test Dates	April	December, January, May	Winter
Test Content	Math English Language Arts Science	Literature Biology Algebra 1	Listening Speaking Reading Writing
Test Purpose	Measure student achievement across state levels	End-of-course assessment designed to address proficiency	To determine ESL Placement

## My Test-Taking Skills

Answer the five questions to determine your strengths and weaknesses.

1. How do I feel about taking tests?

_____	Well prepared	_____	Nervous
_____	Don't care	_____	Other

2. How do I study for tests?

_____	Notes	_____	Books
_____	I don't	_____	Other

3. When do I begin studying for tests?

_____	1 week before	_____	1 - 2 days before
_____	Never	_____	Other

4. What would I do if I cannot understand the test?

_____	Ask the teacher	_____	Read the directions
_____	Leave it blank	_____	Other

5. What would I do if I failed my test?

_____	Talk to the teacher	_____	Try harder next time
_____	Nothing	_____	Other

What are my strengths in preparing for tests?

What are my weaknesses in preparing for tests?

## How can I develop good study habits?

**Find a good place to study where there are no distractions.**

Where will I study?

Answer

**Determine a good time of day and how long to study when you are most alert. Do this the same time every day.**

When will I study and for how long?

Answer

**Keep necessary supplies such as paper, pencils, highlighters, textbooks, graphic organizer, rulers, calculators, protractors.**

Which of these supplies do I need?

Answer

**Write in a planner or a calendar when tests and assignments are due.**

What will I use to keep track of my test dates?

Answer

**Organize notes and assignments for each class in folders or a binder.**

How will I keep my notes and assignments organized?

Answer

**All materials should be kept in a bag or container to easily access while studying.**

Do I have a place to keep and organize my supplies?

Answer

## Test Preparation

### Before the Test:

- Get a good night's sleep.
- Wear comfortable clothing.
- Eat a well-balanced meal.
- Arrive early and take a moment to relax and reduce your anxiety.
- Come to classroom prepared with tools you will need for the test.
- Take good notes.
- Make a checklist of what you must study for the exam. Example would be flashcards.
- Prior to taking the test, inquire when and where grades will be posted or when test will be returned to you.

### During the Test:

- Listen to directions.
- Read the test directions.
- Budget your time. Pace yourself. Try for the most points in the time you have.
- Scan the entire test before you start.
- Read each question carefully and make sure you understand them.
- Note or underline key words and terms.
- Read multiple choice options carefully.
- Answer questions you know first. Hard questions can be left until last. This relieves tension and gives you confidence, thus allowing you to access your memory as you proceed.
- Go with your gut when you answer the question. Don't read too much into it.
- If a question seems complicated or difficult to understand:
  - Put it in your own words.
  - Break it down.
- Know the scoring policy. Are you penalized for guessing? How many points are questions worth? Are you graded only on the ones you get correct?



- Learn from the test. Often the answer to a question is found in another test question.

\*See Appendix 2 for specific test taking strategies for each kind of test question

After the Test:

- Go back over and check to be sure you answered all the questions.
- If time permits, review the test questions you were not sure of immediately. Verify correct answers and find answers to questions you didn't know.
- When you get the test back, review and record all the correct answers to questions you missed.
- Give yourself credit for the ones you answered correctly and do not focus on your mistakes.

These strategies are suggested methods. Not all these methods will work for every student. Each student has their own learning style that suits them. Search for strategies that will be suitable to your needs.

## Other Resources

- [Test Taking Tips](#)
- [ONTRACK college and career readiness program](#)
- Websites [Khan Academy SATs](#)
- [College Board](#)
- Flash Cards [Magoosh SAT Flashcards](#)  
[Quizlet SAT Common Words](#)

## Assessments – Culminating Activity

List all required high school exams you will take this year

List all required high school exams you must take to earn a high school diploma

Will you be preparing for and/or taking any tests required for college during this school year? If so, please list here

## Action Plan

Write down the test-taking strategies that you plan to use in the chart below.

<b>Before the Test:</b>
<b>During the Test:</b>
<b>After the Test:</b>

## Section 4: Career and Postsecondary Planning

### Section at a Glance

This section describes in detail the steps that you will need to take in order to prepare for and fund post-high school education and career. These discussions and preparations should begin early and involve as many supportive educators, mentors, family members and peers as possible.

### Highlights

- Type of postsecondary education
- Postsecondary programs
- College essay
- Student checklist
- Career planning myths
- Questions to ask counselor and on a college visit
- Financial aid and FAFSA
- Scholarship resources

What types of postsecondary school/program matches your talents and interests?

- You should start thinking about postsecondary options as early as 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Every college, trade school and university in the U.S. has its own entrance requirements. You can find this information online or through the school counselor or Migrant Support Staff.
- Get involved into the college preparedness programs available in each school district.

## Postsecondary Programs

College Type	What You Can Earn	Career Examples	Characteristics
<b>Apprenticeship / On-the-Job Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nationally-recognized credential from the U.S. Department of Labor</li> <li>Paid Work</li> <li>Debt-Free College Credit</li> <li>Workplace-relevant knowledge and skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Software Developer</li> <li>Pharmacy Technician</li> <li>Mechanic</li> <li>Certified Nursing Assistant</li> <li>Construction Craft Laborer</li> <li>Electrician</li> <li>Welder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working from day one</li> <li>Incremental wage increases</li> <li>Competitive wages over a lifetime</li> </ul>
<b>Trade / Technical School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certificate</li> <li>Diploma</li> <li>Associate's degree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Computer Programmer</li> <li>Cosmetologist</li> <li>Dental Assistant</li> <li>Mechanic</li> <li>Medical Assistant</li> <li>Plumber</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smaller class sizes</li> <li>Evening and weekend classes offered</li> <li>Focus on skills necessary for a specific career</li> </ul>
<b>Community College</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certificate</li> <li>Diploma</li> <li>Associate's degree</li> <li>The ability to transfer to a 4-year college or university</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accountant</li> <li>Airplane Mechanic</li> <li>Legal Assistant</li> <li>Paramedic</li> <li>Dental Hygienist</li> <li>Restaurant Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smaller class sizes</li> <li>Evening and weekend classes offered</li> <li>Can often transfer to a 4-year college or university</li> <li>Often smaller schools found in communities</li> </ul>
<b>4-year College or University</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's degree</li> <li>Master's degree</li> <li>Doctorate degree</li> <li>Professional degrees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engineer</li> <li>Graphic Designer</li> <li>Pharmacist</li> <li>Pilot</li> <li>Social worker</li> <li>Teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most people attend full-time</li> <li>Can take many different classes</li> <li>Usually have dorms on campus</li> </ul>

## Keywords

**Associate's degree:** A type of degree awarded to students at a U.S. community college, usually after two years of study.

**Bachelor's degree:** A degree awarded to undergraduates, usually after four years of study at college.

**Career:** The occupation for which you or your student is trained.

**College:** Any education after high school that earns your students a degree.

**Community College:** Colleges that provide the first two years of a four-year college education or prepare students for certain jobs.

**Degree:** What you student earn when you graduate from college, like an associate's or bachelor's degree.

**Technical College:** Colleges that offer employment courses and programs, which teach specific knowledge and skills leading to certain jobs.

**University:** A type of school that offers a degree and a wide variety of majors.

Use the checklist below to see if you're on track for postsecondary education and career planning.

### Tips for Writing a Good College Essay

- Get started by brainstorming. Think about your personality traits and strengths.
- Let your first draft flow. Organize your essay and decide where you want to include examples. Do not worry at this stage about making it perfect.
- Find a creative angle as a focus for your essay.
- Be specific. Make sure that everything you write supports the viewpoint or angle you have chosen.
- Be honest. Answer the question honestly, not by trying to guess what the admission officer wants to hear.
- Get feedback. Show your essay to friends and family. Ask if it makes sense and sounds like you. Listen to their suggestions but be sure to keep your own voice.
- Proofread and make corrections. Check for spelling and grammar errors and typos. Also ask a friend or family member to look it over since they may catch mistakes that you missed.

### Preparing for Postsecondary Education

#### Student Check List

#### 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Meet with your school counselor to make sure you are enrolled in classes that fulfill graduation requirements and will prepare you for postsecondary education, the military, or a career.
- Discuss and create a possible plan to save money for college if you have not done so already.
- Enroll in classes that fulfill graduation requirements and build study skills.
- Match your interests with careers ([O\\*Net](#)) – [PA Career Zone](#).
- Introduce yourself to your school counselor and discuss your plans.
- Ask your counselor if your high school offers a vocational option for 10<sup>th</sup> grade, if interested.
- Learn the basics and talk to your parents about costs, saving, and financial aid.
- Get involved in extracurricular activities that support your interests and build life skills such as leadership, self-reliance, creativity, teamwork, decision-making, and financial literacy.

#### 10<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Meet with your school counselor to make sure you are on track for graduation.
- Use the school counselor's office, internet, and public library to find information on college/technical school programs, tuition, and fee costs, and scholarships.
- Continue to take classes that fulfill graduation requirements and build skills.
- Continue involvement in extracurricular or volunteer activities.
- Visit college/Technical Schools and participate in summer college prep programs, if available.

#### 11<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Meet with your school counselor to make sure you are on track for graduation.
- Continue taking courses required for high school graduation.
- Sign up to take the PSAT in the fall if needed (If unsure talk to your counselor).
- Make a list of college / technical schools of interest.
- Research and narrow down possible college / technical schools majors and careers.
- Register for the SAT and or ACT in the spring.
- Prepare for the SAT or ACT.

## Preparing for Postsecondary Education

- Continue exploring and making decisions about majors and careers.
- Visit colleges /technical schools through the year. Inform yourself about college trips with your school counselor.
- Make a list of at least 5 colleges/technical schools that interest you.
- Talk to your parents and counselor about financial aid.
- Search for scholarships that match your financial needs.
- Plan summer activities: volunteer, attend summer programs, or find a job or internship that matches your interests and builds valuable skills.
- During the summer take campus tours of schools of your interest with your parents, if possible.
- Prepare for SAT if you are thinking about taking it in your senior year.

### 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Meet with your school counselor to make sure you are on track for graduation.
- Narrow down your list to 5 colleges/technical schools and apply as soon as possible.
- Get an application and financial aid information from each school.
- Create a calendar that highlights important dates and deadlines.
- Meet with your counselor early in the year to discuss your college plans.
- If letters of recommendation are required, request them at least four weeks before your application deadline.
- Write application essays (if needed) and have them reviewed by a teacher.
- Register to take the SAT or ACT, if needed.
- Ask your counselor to send your transcript to the colleges/trade schools you applied to.
- Make copies of all documents you send. Contact colleges/trade schools to make sure that they have received materials.
- Submit FAFSA and PHEAA applications (First day to complete FAFSA is on October 1<sup>st</sup>, [Student Aid](#)).
- Compare financial aid packages carefully, If you need help talk to your counselor or MEP staff.
- Visit your chosen college/trade school before accepting.
- Watch for acceptance or rejection letter, usually sent before the month of May.
- Notify colleges of your acceptance or rejection of offers by May 1.
- Ask your high school to send a final transcript to your college.
- Make sure that your tuition and fees are paid.
- Finalize housing and food plans.
- Prepare for the exciting year ahead.

## Career Planning Myths

Myth	Truth
You have to go to college to get a good job.	No degree guarantees a good job. Many jobs that pay well and are interesting don't require a Bachelor's degree.
There is one right job just for me.	There are many jobs that will suit your personality, use your talents and incorporate your interests.
You must have experience to find a job.	Not Always. Aptitude, attitude, potential and willingness to learn can get you hired.
Everyone starts their career after graduating in a straight line toward their career goals.	This is actually very rare now. Most people change jobs and even whole careers, several times in the course of lifetime.
You make a career plan, stick to it, and it's done.	Career plans are revisited and refined all the time. You can change career directions whenever your needs dictate and your talents and resources allow.
There is a specific set of job duties for every occupation.	Job duties often evolve based on an individual's capabilities and the needs of the employer.
First college, then a good paying job and I'm set for life.	Somethings that you can't control like the economy, downsizing, outsourcing or technological advances can throw a monkey wrench in your well-planned life.
I cannot afford to attend college.	Scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study make college affordable for many students.



Below are some questions to ask of the school counselor and on a college visit.

### **Questions to Ask a School Counselor About College**

1. What classes do I need?
2. What entrance exams will I need take?
3. When do I need to submit college application?
4. What should I consider in my college selection?
5. How should I choose a major?
6. How does financial aid work?
7. What grants, and scholarships can I apply for? What about work-study?
8. Are there extracurricular activities that can help me prepare for college?
9. What college resources do you recommend?
10. Will you help me throughout the college selection process?

## Questions to Ask on a College Visit

### Ask Admissions Representatives

#### General Questions

1. What academic assistance resources are available?
2. What kind of academic advising is available to help students choose classes and a major?
3. What kinds of career services and employment resources are available?
4. What is the average class size? How are classes taught?
5. How can student learn about scholarships, grants, work-study, and other forms of financial aid?

### Ask Students

#### General Questions

1. What do you like best about the school, and what do you think could be improved?
2. Is Tutoring available?
3. Has your adviser been helpful?
4. Do you feel connected to your teachers, and are they accessible/supportive/helpful?
5. Do you find the student body diverse?
6. Have you had an internship, and did the school help you?

#### About Student Life

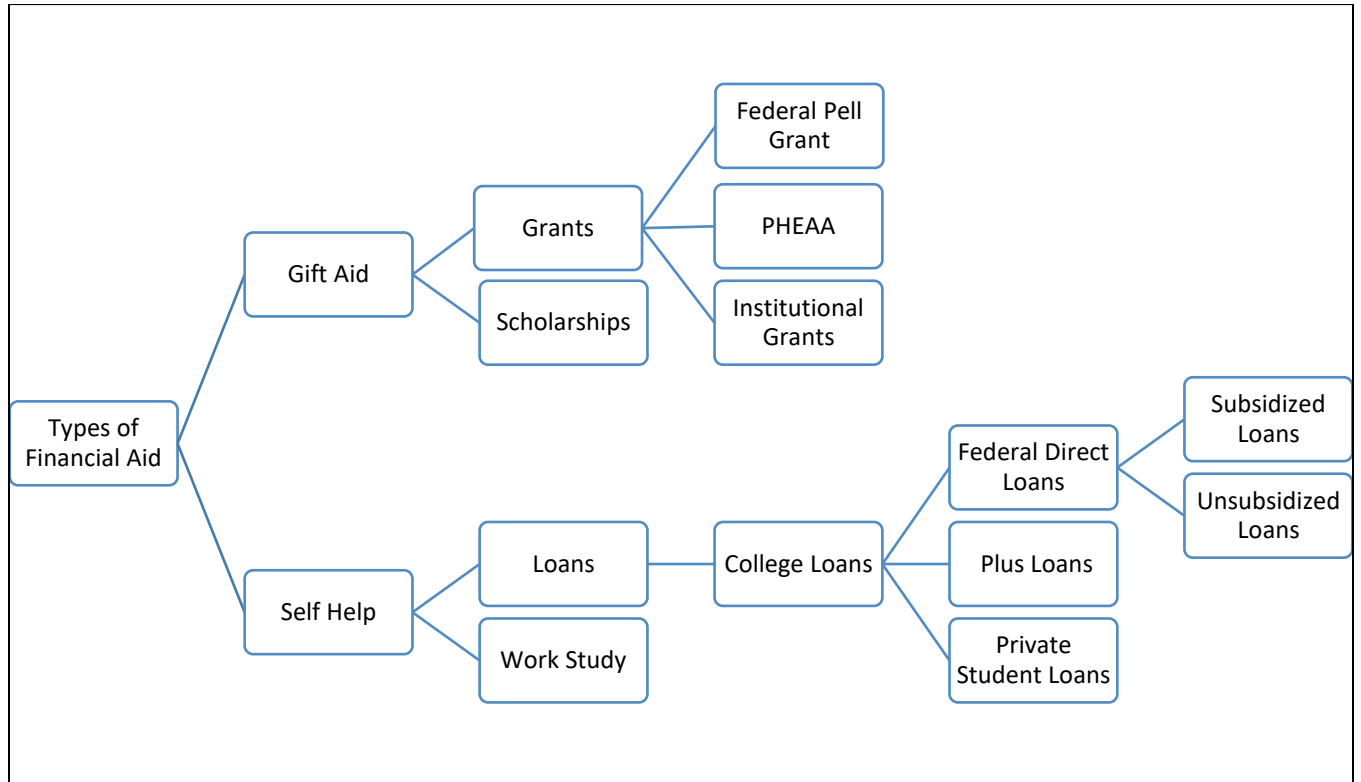
1. How accessible is public transportation?
2. Is student housing guaranteed for all freshman students? For all four years?
3. What systems are in place for student safety?
4. What clubs and student activities are available on campus?
5. Are there safety escorts in the evening for students?

#### About Student Life

1. Do you feel safe on campus?
2. How do you get to school?
3. Do most students live in the dorms or commute?
4. What do students do on campus during the weekend?
5. What do students do with their free time?

## Paying for Postsecondary Education

As shown in the flowchart below, there are two main types of financial aid: gift (grants, scholarships) and self-help (loans or work-study). You may need to do both. The terms are explained after the flowchart.



### Types of Financial Aid

#### Keywords

**Federal Direct Loans:** A program that provides low-interest loans to postsecondary students and their parents.

**Federal Pell Grant:** Subsidy the U.S federal government provides for students who need it to pay for college.

**Financial Aid:** Financial aid from the federal government to help you pay for education expenses at an eligible colleges or career school.

**Grants:** Financial aid often based on financial need that does not need to be repaid.

**Loans:** Money college students or their parents borrow to help pay for college.

**PHEAA Student Grants and Loans:** (The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency) is based on financial need.

**Plus Loans:** Loans from private institutions are available to pay college expenses, based on your credit history.

**Private Student Loans:** Loans from private institutions are available to pay college expenses, based on your credit history.

**Scholarships:** Money given to a college student because of a special achievement, ability, or background.

**Subsidized Loans:** Based on financial need. The government subsidizes (pays) the interest on your loan while you are in school and for a grace period of six months after graduation.

**Unsubsidized Loans:** Loans that are not based on financial need. You will be charged interest from the time you borrow the money until the loan is paid off.

**Work Study:** Jobs offered through a college and funded by the government to help students pay for college.

## **The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**

The FAFSA is the standard application form used to apply for financial aid from all federal programs. The application process is free, and the form is available online. It is your key to receiving grants, work-study, loans, and even some scholarships.

### **The 2018-2019 FAFSA**

Since 2016 students can file their FAFSA three months earlier than in past years.

- The 2019-2020 FAFSA may be filed as early as October 1, 2018.
- Students and families will provide tax information from two years prior (i.e., tax filings for 2016 will be used when filing the 2018-2019 FAFSA).

### **Free Help with Your FAFSA**

There are a number of ways to get help filing your FAFSA:

- Call 1-800-730-8913 to ask a question.
- Visit [U.S. Department of Education Student Aid](#) for detailed instruction.
- Visit [U.S. Department of Education Student Aid Contact](#) for Frequently Asked Questions and contact information.
- Learn about free FAFSA filing “Help Events” at [PHEAA FAFSA Events](#).
- Avoid any FAFSA assistance that is not free.

## **Steps to Conquer the FAFSA**

### **Choose your filing method.**

There are three ways to complete your FAFSA:

- Complete the form online at [FAFSA](#)
- Download a PDF form from [Student Aid](#)
- Request a paper copy of the FAFSA by calling 1-800-433-3243

### **Organize your paperwork.**

You will need the following documents and information:

- Your Social Security Number (SSN);
- Your alien registration number (If you are not a U.S. citizen);
- The most recent federal income tax returns, W-2s and other records of money earned by you and your parents;
- Records of 2016 untaxed income (such as social security public assistance) for you and your parents (if applicable); and
- Your FSA ID, which you will use to sign the forms electronically.

### **Set up your Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID).**

- Log on to [FAFSA](#) and click on the link to create your FSA ID.
- Select a username and password.
- Enter your email address, name, date of birth, Social Security number, contact information and security challenge questions and answers.
- Review your information and accept the site's term and conditions.
- Confirm your email address using a secure code, which is sent to the email address you entered when you created your FSA ID.

### **Prepare to provide income verification.**

You may be asked to verify the income information, which you provide, on the FAFSA by supplying copies of documentation.

### **Submit your FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1.**

Check for any FAFSA deadlines at each school to which you are applying.

## **Review your Student Aid Report (SAR).**

Three to five days after you submit your FAFSA signed with your FSA ID, your Student Aid Report (SAR) will be available.

## **CAMP Program Description & Eligibility**

The **College Assistance Migrant Program** at Millersville University (CAMP or MU CAMP) provides supportive and retention services to first-year university students from migrant and seasonal farm worker families. Supportive services include counseling, tutoring, skills workshops, financial aid stipends, health services, and housing assistance to eligible students.

CAMP works with campus faculty, student services, and community-based organizations to help CAMP students make the most of their educational opportunities during their first year at the university.

## **Who is eligible to participate in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)?**

To be eligible to participate in CAMP, the student or at least one parent must be a **seasonal or migrant farmworker**.

- **Seasonal farmworker** is a person who, currently or within the past 24 months, was employed for at least 75 days in farm work, and whose primary employment was in farm work on a temporary or seasonal basis (that is, not a constant year-round activity).
- **Migrant farmworker** is a seasonal farmworker whose employment requires travel that prevents them from returning to their home within the same day. Students may also be eligible if they participated in a Chapter 1 Migrant Education Program or the National Farmworker Jobs Program. Students must have a high school diploma or GED, be U.S. citizen or a Legal Resident, FAFSA eligible, and accepted at Millersville University.

## **Scholarships**

There are scholarships for every type of student seeking a college education. Some types of scholarships include academic, athletic, community service, or for a particular ethnic group or gender. Additional items to make your scholarship application stand out are:

- Volunteer hours
- Enrolling in a school club
- Being active in school
- Being active in your community

An undocumented student may have difficulty funding their education. Laws vary between states as far as in-state tuition for undocumented students who graduate from a state high school. Below are some scholarships specifically targeted to undocumented/foreign students.

## **Scholarship Resources for Undocumented / Foreign Students**

- [Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund](#)
  - Lists of scholarships available for undocumented students
  
- [Fast Web Scholarship Search](#)
  
- [Edupass Scholarship Search Engine](#)
  - Provides information to students on college admissions, financial aid, passport, and visa information
  
- [International Education Financial Aid](#)
  - Provides information for international students about loans and studying abroad
  
- [Hispanic Scholarship Fund](#)
  - Lists scholarships targeted specifically to Hispanic students
  
- [Geneseo Migrant Center](#)
  - Lists local and national scholarships available for migrant students

## Culminating Activity

**What type of postsecondary program would you like to pursue?**

**List some schools you're interested in.**

**How do you plan to pay for school?**

**Who can assist me in this process?**



## Action Plan

In the chart below, fill out steps you will take to be ready for postsecondary education, by grade level

<b>What do I need to do in middle school?</b>	<b>What do I need to do in high school?</b>	<b>Who do I ask for help to prepare for postsecondary education and future?</b>

## Section 5: Information for Service Providers

### Background

The 2013 Diploma Project came out of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) Review in 2011-12. The High School Graduation team was charged with identifying effective strategies for decreasing the likelihood of migrant students dropping out of high school and increasing the rate at which they graduate and pursue postsecondary opportunities. A survey of parents and students at that time, indicated that while parents and students responded that it is important to graduate from high school and continuing education beyond high school, most did not know the requirements for either.

In 2016-17, the PA-MEP conducted the CNA/Service Delivery Plan (SDP) review and the committee determined that high school graduation was still a high priority area. The committee made suggestions to improve the Diploma Project:

- Revise Diploma Project modules to address knowledge of graduation requirements, career and educational goals, social and emotional development, and various forms of literacy (e.g., financial, such as banking, budgeting).
- Make resources available in languages other than English.
- Develop a step-by-step checklist and assessments aligned to redesign.
- Add units that are age-appropriate and align 5-6 modules to the new, differentiated design.
- Create an introductory Diploma Project module for parents that provides rationale for program, informs parents of educational rights, offers a “how-to” for approaching school districts and community agencies for help, handling parent and teacher conferences, accessing health and wellness resources, etc.
- Provide written translation of subsequent modules in languages other than English and interpreters for group sessions.

The Diploma Project is part the MPO that has been identified:

Focus Area	State Performance Target	Measurable Program Outcome (MPO)
Graduation	By 2021, increase the percentage of 12th grade migrant students who graduate by five percentage points from the 2015-16 baseline of 87percent.	(3) By the end of 2020-21, 80 percent of migrant students who complete the Diploma Project or other supplemental college readiness activities, will graduate after four years of high school.

Results of the 2016 Parent and Out of Youth Comprehensive Survey indicate that many parents still were unsure of the requirements for completion of high school and pursuing postsecondary opportunities, though they thought it was important for their children to do so. The 2016 survey didn't desegregate data by completion of Diploma Project Units. In the 2017 survey, the gap shrunk, however even some of those parents who received instruction in the Diploma Project indicated they did not know the requirements.

## **Introduction**

The *Diploma Project Toolkit* is a handbook created to aid in the success of migrant students in earning a high school diploma and making a smooth transition to career or postsecondary education.

The *Diploma Project Toolkit* is designed for use by the Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program (PA-MEP) in conversation with migrant students and their families with input from the school counselor and others. It includes practical guidelines for setting academic and career goals, planning a course of study based on the high school credits and courses required by the local school and district, preparing for exams, and finding a suitable postsecondary program.

The *Diploma Project Toolkit* is divided into four student units, which may be used in any order depending on student goals/needs. Each unit provides information, tips, and a culminating activity for review of the unit. Each unit also provides an action plan that encourages students to apply their new knowledge. There is also a companion document specifically geared for parents. It includes elements of each unit in a parent-friendly format. PA-MEP staff are advised to introduce the Toolkit as early as possible in a student's high school career, starting with the transition from 8<sup>th</sup> grade into high school, and to use it as a reference tool whenever discussing a student's program and progress.

## **Updates in this Revision:**

- Unit 1 (Goal Setting) contains a needs assessment for out-of-school youth and the mentoring material be moved to Unit 2. The Eighth Grade Survey and related action plan have also been incorporated in this unit.
- Unit 2 (High School Credits and Courses) has been simplified and adds more targeted information including keywords and mentorship.
- Unit 3 (Tests and Test Preparation, formerly Assessment) had a focus on high stakes proficiency tests (Keystone Exams) and the timing of college entrance exams. Now the focus will be on tests and test preparation.
- Former Unit 4 (English Language Proficiency), has been eliminated. This unit was not being used widely in the field.
- Unit 4 – Previous Unit 5 (Career and Postsecondary Planning, formerly Preparing and Paying for Postsecondary) Has been renamed and simplifies information into charts and key terms. It includes specific and more user-friendly information on the FAFSA,

financial aid for undocumented students, career planning myths and questions to ask counselors and on college visits.

- A new stand-alone companion document (Parent – Road to College and Career) was created because providing 5 separate units for parents was challenging. Furthermore, annual survey results indicated that while parents are interested in their child's high school graduation and postsecondary plans, they knew a little or were not sure of the requirements. These results mirrored the results of the 2012-13 Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Service Delivery Plan. This unit is translated in the 9 languages most common for parents of students in grades 8-12.

## **How Will the Toolkit be Used?**

The *Diploma Project Toolkit* is designed to support migrant educators as you engage migrant students (in grades 8-12) and their families in discussions about what is needed to graduate high school and plan wisely for postsecondary programs.

Student and parent training venues vary greatly. Student sessions typically occur during after-school, Saturday, or summer programs as well as during home visits. Access to the parents is more limited but is likely to occur either during home visits or at Parent Advisory Council (PAC) or other parent meetings. Because of its flexibility, the Toolkit can be used in a variety of instructional settings including individualized tutorials, family sessions, and as a curriculum in a larger group setting.

***Note: The Toolkit is meant as a resource for PA-MEP staff to provide guidance and support to migrant students and their parents. While the expectation is that the Toolkit may be made available to students and parents in part or in its entirety, it is not meant as an unsupervised handout for students or families.***

Ideally, the Toolkit is designed for use beginning as early as 8<sup>th</sup> grade and following a process until the student's assessed needs are met. However, the reality of the migrant lifestyle requires a degree of flexibility in how and when the Toolkit is utilized. In cases where time is a consideration or where there is a targeted need, you may adapt the process, and you may select particular units or parts of units that best meet the needs of the students and their families.

When choosing which students might benefit from the Diploma Project, it is important to assess as many students as possible in order to ensure that you are working not only with students who are at risk of dropping out, but also with those who may be progressing well in school but need support for their postsecondary aspirations.

On MIS2000 you will be asked to enter on a per unit basis whether a student has completed a Unit it will be marked C – Completed or I – In Progress. Completion or In Progress will also be marked for the companion parent document.

## Tips for PA-MEP Staff

- Consider how much time you and your team will have to dedicate to the Diploma Project. Allow ample planning time to review each unit, identify local/regional requirements (e.g. required course credits), seek out supplementary resources and activities, and translate materials if needed. Be aware that you may need more than one section for each unit based on student background knowledge and ability.
- Before involving students, determine the best way to introduce the Diploma Project. A Power Point or handout clarifying program details and what can be accomplished through participation might be an appropriate way to get potential students and their parents interested.
- In determining which units to cover, consider the student's grade level, school performance, motivation, educational goals, missing credits, in addition to the likely amount of time that you will spend with the student.
- If including parents in the process is not feasible, make every effort to keep them informed of their child's goals and progress particularly in key areas such as career choices and graduation requirements. Encourage parents to become an active member of their child's "Planning Team."
- If appropriate, pages of the Toolkit may be used as "homework" assignments for students and/or their parents. This strategy is particularly useful if you have limited access (e.g. home visits) to your students and/or their parents and want to maximize the time you spend with them.

## Appendix 1



### Evaluating Foreign Transcripts

*A Resource Guide for School Districts  
Provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Education*

#### **Foreword**

This document was adapted from guidance produced by the Office of Youth Development and School- Community Services (OYDSCS) of the New York City Department of Education (DOE). The original document can be found at <http://schools.nyc.gov>.

It is intended as a reference tool for districts to assist school staff members with evaluating foreign transcripts for students newly enrolling from other countries.

When using this manual, it is important to keep in mind that several school systems and grading policies might exist within each country, as in the United States. Careful judgment and discretion are advised when utilizing the information presented in this manual. The information provides a general picture of the most commonly used systems in other countries and grading scales, recommended courses, and the equivalent credit within U.S. schools.

Evaluators are advised to:

- Carefully examine all official documents for authenticity.
- Ensure that translations are provided by a qualified source.
- Interview entering students and their parents/guardians.
- Contact the sending school, embassy, Ministry of Education, or other authorized agencies when necessary.

#### **School Responsibility**

Schools or districts are responsible for conducting of the evaluation of the transcript.

Each school or district should have a well-defined procedure, including the roles and responsibilities of staff members involved, for timely evaluation of transcripts according to guidelines set forth in this manual.

## Recommended Practice for Evaluating Transcripts

The following are recommended procedures for evaluating transcripts:

1. Examine official documents for authenticity.
2. Ensure transcripts in a language other than English are translated by a competent translator available within the school or region. In the event there is no available translator, the district may contract for translation with a local translation/interpretation company.

Documents translated by family members should not be accepted as official documents. All translations should be verbatim without interpretation or evaluation of information.

3. Interview the student and parent/guardian to review the transcript and prior studies in order to obtain clarification on curriculum, amount of time spent in each course, grading policies, and other pertinent information helpful to the evaluation process.
4. Determine if content course placement testing is necessary in those cases in which information or achievement is unclear. This is different from language proficiency testing for EL program placement.
5. Refer to the Country Index (Section II of this manual) to assist with the conversion of grades to award appropriate course and grade credit.
6. Follow established school procedures for ensuring that transfer credit is updated on the student's official transcript.
7. Establish a procedure for informing the student and parent(s) of the results of the evaluation.
8. Maintain all documentation in the student's official file.
9. Notify and consult with receiving teachers and department supervisors or heads for academic content course placements and award of academic credits based on transcript review. Coordinate with the EL director to ensure proper EL program placement and also to ensure that all content teachers are aware of EL needs.
10. Ensure the evaluation process is completed in a timely manner.

## Transfer Credit

Transfer credits for a high school student transferring from another state or another country are awarded by the receiving district for work done outside the high school awarding the credit based on the review of their transcripts. PA Code Title 22 Chapter 4.23. High school education outlines the requirements for programs of instruction leading to graduation.

1. Instruction in the high school program must focus on the development of abilities needed to succeed in work and advanced education through planned instruction.
2. Curriculum and instruction in the high school must be standards-based and provide all students opportunities to develop the skills of analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and problem-solving and information literacy.
3. Planned instruction aligned with academic standards in the following areas shall be provided to every student in the high school program. Planned instruction may be provided as a separate course or as an instructional unit within a course or other interdisciplinary instructional activity:
  - a. Language arts, integrating reading, writing, listening, speaking, literature and grammar. Mathematics, including problem-solving, mathematical reasoning, algebra, geometry, and concepts of calculus.
  - b. Science and technology, including participation in hands-on experiments and at least one laboratory science chosen from life sciences, earth and space sciences, chemical sciences, physical sciences, and agricultural sciences.
  - c. Social studies (civics and government, economics, geography, and history, including the history and cultures of the United States, the Commonwealth, and the world).
  - d. Environment and ecology, including scientific, social, political, and economic aspects of ecology.
  - e. The arts, including art, music, dance, theatre, and humanities.
  - f. Use of applications of microcomputers and software, including word processing, database, spreadsheets, and telecommunications; and information skills, including access to traditional and electronic information sources, computer use and research.
  - g. Health, safety, and physical education, including instruction in concepts and skills which affect personal, family and community health and safety, nutrition, physical fitness, movement concepts, motor skill development, safety in physical activity settings, and the prevention of alcohol, chemical and tobacco abuse.
  - h. Family and consumer science, including principles of consumer behavior and basic knowledge of child health, child care and early literacy skill development.
4. The following planned instruction shall be made available to every student in the high school program:
  - a. Vocational-technical education under §§ 4.3 and 4.31—4.35.



- b. Business education, including courses to assist students in developing business and information technology skills.
  - c. World languages under § 4.25 (relating to languages).
  - d. Technology education, incorporating technological problem-solving and the impacts of technology on individuals and society.
5. College-level advanced placement courses may be offered as planned instruction in the high school curriculum.
6. This section does not preclude the teaching of other planned instruction designed to achieve a school district's, including a charter school's academic standards.
7. School districts, including a charter school, shall determine the most appropriate way to operate their high school programs to achieve the purposes under subsection (a) and any additional academic standards as determined by the school entity.

The appropriate school personnel should evaluate the transcript or other records of a transfer student enrolling in their school. Based on the student's transcript or other records, the district should award the appropriate units of transfer credit towards a high school diploma.

**The decision to award transfer credit for work done at educational institutions other than Pennsylvania registered high schools shall be based on whether the record indicates that the work is consistent with the district's and state's standards and is of comparable scope and quality to that which would have been done in the school awarding the credit.**

*An example of this process:*

A student arrives from Colombia in tenth grade. In reviewing her transcript, the school counselor notices that she has completed two English courses with passing grades. The school counselor interviews the student to determine the content of the courses because no other information is available. The counselor determines, with input from the EL coordinator, that the courses taken by the student only covered interpersonal communicative English. The counselor does NOT award English language arts credit, though, because the ELA courses at the high school are aligned to state standards that require mastery of academic English related to, among other things, literature (theme, complex character development, text structure, etc.) and informational text (development of ideas/claims, evaluation of arguments, point of view, etc.). There is no evidence that the English courses taken by this student covered these standards. To be thorough, the counselor administers a ninth grade end of course ELA exam to this student to see if she has the skills required by the standards. The student does not meet the minimum score requirement, so the counselor awards her two foreign language credits for the English classes that she took in Colombia instead, since those courses very closely match foreign language course standards utilized in the district.

This process must be followed for the award of credit for all courses taken at schools outside of the state.

## Appendix 2

### GENERAL TIPS FOR ALL TESTS

- Scan the entire test before you start.
- Read the directions and make sure you understand them.
- Know the scoring policy. Are you penalized for guessing? How many points are questions worth? Are you graded only on the ones you get correct?
- Budget your time. Pace yourself. Try for the most points in the time you have.
- Attempt to answer every question. Hard questions can be left until last unless they carry a great deal of value and you need more time in answering them.
- Take questions at face value. Do not read things into them.
- Answer questions you know first. This relieves tension and gives you confidence, thus allowing you to access your memory as you proceed.
- If a question seems complicated or difficult to understand, put it in your own words or break it down into understandable parts.
- Learn from the test. Often the answer to a question is found in another test question.

### CHECKING OVER THE TEST

Go back over and check to be sure you answered all the questions. On machine-scored tests, be sure you placed your answers in the right spaces. Proofread your essays.

DO NOT change an answer unless...

- There is indisputable evidence that your answer is incorrect.
- You had misread or misunderstood the question.
- You recall information or find the correct answer in the test.

### TEST ETIQUETTE AND CHEATING

The following rules apply to any test situation. They will enable you to avoid possible problems with regard to cheating, the appearance of cheating, disruptive or improper behavior during a test:

- Arrive on time. Arriving late is disruptive to the other students.
- Do not talk after the test begins. If you have a question, address it to the instructor, quietly, without disturbing other students.
- Avoid any disruptive behavior such as sighing, fidgeting, or making noise.

- Do not bring food or drinks to the test except with instructor permission.
- Do not show your work to anyone or look at anyone else's work.
- Do not pass or receive notes, papers, books, or any information from another student during a test.
- Have nothing on your desk or table top except the materials needed to take the test (a writing tool, calculator, ruler, etc.), as required by the instructor.
- Maintain silence at all times, even if spoken to by another student.
- Work independently.
- If you have to leave the room for any reason, obtain the instructor's permission.
- Do not take any books, book bags, or notes with you.
- When finished, submit the test to the instructor and leave the room quietly.
- Do not stand outside the classroom talking with other students, as this will disturb students still taking the test.

### **MULTIPLE CHOICE STRATEGIES**

- Answer the easy questions first, then the harder ones. Don't get nervous if some questions look unfamiliar. Skip them and return to them later.
- Pay attention to words that may change the whole meaning of a sentence ("usually," "none," "always," "never") and words that give you a specific focus ("except," "all but the following," "the best," "the least," etc.)
- Try to anticipate the correct answer before looking at the options.
- Read all of the options; eliminate the ones you know are incorrect.
- Look for options that contain other options (selections). These are called "umbrella" options because the other options fall within their scope. To better understand this strategy, see page 16 of [http://www.wiu.edu/advising/docs/mastering\\_test\\_taking.pdf](http://www.wiu.edu/advising/docs/mastering_test_taking.pdf)
- Familiarity of a response option (selection) does not necessarily make it the correct choice.
- Sometimes the longer response may be the clue to the correct response.

### **TRUE - FALSE STRATEGIES**

- Watch for absolutes (words) such as "always," "never," or "all" and "none." If they are present, chances are the statement is false.
- If a statement is more detailed or specific than most, chances are it is true.

- Never leave a blank – you have a 50% chance of getting it right!
- Unusual sounding statements are likely to be false.

### **MATCHING COLUMNS STRATEGIES**

- Read all the items in both columns first before selecting answers.
- Instead of looking at the one word column first and trying to select a match, read the column with the definitions or explanations and match those to the one-word column.
- Mark easy choices first and eliminate them as you move to the more difficult.

### **SHORT ANSWER AND FILL-IN-THE-BLANK STRATEGIES**

- If you don't know the complete answer but remember something, write it down. You may get partial credit if you are partly correct. Leaving a blank will get you nothing.
- Give general answers if you do not know specifics (details). Example: Correct answer = 1904; Approximate and possibly correct answer = 1900s
- Use proper grammar in completing the sentence. Pay attention to plural responses (ex. causes, changes, examples, types of, etc.).
- Consider the number and length of the lines or blank spaces to be filled in as possible clues to the length of your answer. If the instructor leaves half a page for your answer, be sure you fill it and not with extra-large writing.

### **ESSAY QUESTION STRATEGIES**

Essay exams require good organization and writing skills. The following hints will help you do your best on essay questions.

- Briefly look over the entire test to budget your time for essay answers. They may take longer than other types of questions.
- Read the essay question carefully. Watch for key words such as “discuss,” “compare,” “define,” etc. A list of these commonly used words follows.
- Determine the amount of time you will have for each question and give more time to higher scoring questions.
- Do a “Memory Dump.” Jot down on scratch paper any ideas, facts, figures, etc. which could be used in answering the questions.
- Make a brief outline of the major points. In some cases, even if you can't finish the essay, you can get partial credit for the outline.

- Use proper grammar, punctuation, and sentence skills. Always write complete sentences and begin your essay with the wording of the question. Example: “The five major causes of the American Revolution were....”
- Proofread your essay and make corrections as needed.

## **MATH STRATEGIES**

Students whose math skills are not strong may be intimidated and do poorly only because they let nervousness take over. Math is no different from any other subject, except that the same rules apply every time, so if you study the rules and practice a lot, you are likely to do well on the test.

Here are some other tips:

- Show up about 15 minutes early to do a brief review and get organized.
- Jot down formulas and rules, as long as the instructor knows you did this in class.
- Use pencil so you can make corrections neatly.
- Listen to instructions and read test directions carefully.
- Scan the test first.
- Pay attention to + and – signs, complete problems, and simplify answers.
- Show all your work step by step and turn in your scratch paper (you may get partial credit for work shown).
- Put a box around your answer to make it visible.
- Don’t get bogged down on one problem at the cost of missing others.
- Check every answer.
- Don’t leave any blanks.

Ask questions of the instructor if you do not understand something.

Commonly used essay terms:

**Analyze** - examine critically to show essential features

**Criticize** - point out strong and weak points (evaluate)

**Compare** - show differences and similarities between two or more things

**Contrast** - compare to show differences only

**Define** - give a clear, detailed, and precise meaning (who or what, never, when, or where)

**Describe** - list physical characteristics but often means discuss, explain, identify, or give an account of

**Discuss/Comment** - present essentials and their relationships

**Elaborate** - develop theme or idea in greater detail

**Evaluate** - appraise carefully, giving positive and negative aspects (critique)

**Explain** - clarify and interpret details of the problem, theory, etc. Present a step-by-step account of or analysis (how and why)

**Illustrate** - explain or clarify by giving clear, pertinent examples

**Computer Adaptive Test Strategy.** Drastic change in how the test is administered may be difficult for those who are used to take paper-based exams. Starting is harder, and students need a moment to get used to it. Here are a few tips and strategies for taking Computer Adaptive Tests:

**Study!** Know the topics for the test. Take a look at your study habits, assess them, and correct what needs to be adjusted. You will not only be prepared to answer correctly the questions, but you will also feel confident and less nervous

**Familiarize!** Take your time to get to know how the test will be given. Practice with it, so you can feel less nervous. Most computer based exams (CBE's) and computer adaptive exams (CAEs) have practice resources available on the web for free, use them and incorporate them in your study routine. Practicing with the tests models will give you the chance to see the types of questions that are asked, measure the time it takes you to answer, see what aspects of your performance need to be enhanced and understand the platform before the big day comes.

**Use the tutorials.** Many of them have their own tutorials, designed to get you through the test step by step. If the exam you're taking has one, make sure you go through it from top to bottom. Do it at your own rhythm and don't rush it, pause when needed and go through it again if you have any doubts. Having your test explained step by step is a great support, and it will help you to understand what you need to improve and be ready for your exam.

**Get there early!** If you get to the place of the test early you'll have time to calm your nerves, get familiar with the classroom or lab where you're taking the test and get to know your computer a little bit. Serenity is a key piece to clear thinking. Being on time means that you will be there when all the instructions are given. This is important because every test has its particularities. Also, you'll have the opportunity to ask questions if you have them and start your exam with a clear head.

**Learn the rules.** Pay special attention to the instructions given at the beginning. Every test may be different, some allow you to skip around, while others don't, some others have specific times for breaks, some others require you to log out for a break, and some others don't allow you to logout until you are finished. These specifications are important for your performance and

grades, so listen to the guidance, make sure you know the rules for your test and follow the instructions to the letter. Remember that is a computerized test, so if you submit information or answer incorrectly you won't have the chance to undo it.

**If you have questions, ask.** The professors, teachers, and tutors are there to help you go through your test as best as you can. It doesn't matter if you think that it might be a dumb question, or if you think it is not that important. It's not dumb and it is important. A doubt can harm your performance or make you slower. Don't let something with such a simple solution be a step back in your performance. If you have questions then ask them, period. Of course, ask questions regarding the digital platform or the test's format, not about the actual subject that is being evaluated.

**Use scratch paper.** This is especially useful with math and science tests, but still can help you with any test. Have a blank paper where you can take notes about questions, do your calculations, write relevant details that you might use later, practice a diagram or graphic, take note of a specific question that you'll review later, any other thing you need to remember or anything else you feel will help you answer the questions that follow. But be careful, because this is not allowed in every computerized test, it depends on several aspects. Another reason to know the rules of the test you're taking. Most tests allow paper to take notes. Make sure you take a pencil, eraser, and blank pages, in case they are not provided.

**Concentrate on your answer, not in the system.** Don't worry about how the system works, this is high level coding, there are plenty of people working to make the test secure and cheating-proof. It's useless to invest effort trying to predict a system that is designed to be unpredictable. Instead use your energy and brain to study and answer correctly. It's the only way to assure a great score.

**Be aware/beware of the time.** Every test has time limitations, and the management of the given time is actually one of the abilities to be assessed. Most computerized tests have a timer that indicates how much time you have left. Some are timed by question, others give you an overall time for the entire test. Typically, there is an on-screen clock that counts down the remaining time and alerts you when you are down to five minutes.

Anyway, you must take the time into consideration even when you're practicing. Be aware of your abilities in every topic, so that you know which questions you'll need more time. Don't spend too much time on one question, if you don't know the answer, skip it, and come back to it later (if it's a CBE). In the case of CATs, which don't allow you to skip and come back later, don't stay on one question more than necessarily. So, answering fast is your best choice, even if the answer is wrong, because CATs are scored based on three components, how many questions you answered, how you performed on the questions answered, and statistical information for the questions answered. So, a slow answer can do more harm than a wrong one. Still, this doesn't mean that you should answer anything just to be fast. Just take the necessary time to think your answer, but don't waste time if you already know that you don't know the answer.

**Notes and Additional Resources**

