



COLLEGE
MATCHPOINT

**GUIDE TO ENGAGEMENT
IN HIGH SCHOOL:
THE i4 FRAMEWORK**
2021 EDITION



Using a **Holistic Approach** to High School Activities

Many students and parents ask us questions like, “Should my child join clubs? Which activities look best? How much community service do I need?” But we’d suggest that these may not be the first questions you (or they) should be asking. Instead, we’ve found that students benefit from taking a step back and assessing their aptitudes, skills, and motivations. By asking, “What I naturally do well?”, “What are the skills that I have already developed?”, “What types of activities excite me?”, and “What activity would I try if there was no chance I could fail?” students are able to see how they can build on what they’re already good at and capitalize on what interests them, while also considering how to challenge themselves.

This approach allows them to authentically engage in activities that are meaningful to them. In other words, it sets them up to thrive in high school. And remember, activities come in all shapes and sizes, both school-affiliated and otherwise: sports, clubs, community service, hobbies, internships, jobs, academic summer programs...the list goes on. Far less traditional activities—like building a computer, designing and creating clothing, writing original music or fiction, or researching and sharing strategies to protect the bee population—are also great ways to demonstrate a student’s unique skills, talents, and interests. The nature of the activity isn’t nearly as important as its relationship to the student’s personal journey: the student just needs to demonstrate that they’re passionate about something and strive to deepen their knowledge and engagement.





In this guide, we'll talk about the evolution of student engagement, how to cultivate engagement in your student, and the framework we've developed to help you and your student navigate the high school journey.

THE GROWTH OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE TO HIGH SCHOOLERS

As parents, when we hold our baby in our arms, one of the first things we think is, “Who is this person? What are they going to be like?” Of course we project a thousand things onto them—things we want them to be or not be. As they enter preschool and Kindergarten, their personalities begin to develop, and we start to notice what they gravitate toward. If they won't walk away from the art easel, we wonder if they're going to be creative. If they spend all their time asking for books, building and constructing, or dancing, we attach initial ideas of what that might mean.

And as we see those interests budding and developing, we try to provide additional opportunities for our kids—and they develop along that path. But when they get to high school, they often want to forge their own path, and the number of opportunities for them to engage in more activities, both inside and outside of school, expands. Their ability to have ownership over their activity choices increases exponentially, matching perfectly with where they are developmentally.

High school provides a wonderful opportunity for students to engage in new experiences and activities both inside and outside the classroom. Yes, high school students are still developing their identities, but the activities they enjoy are no longer only a reflection of their family's interests. Instead, their personal interests are starting to define who they are as people.



THE MYTH OF HAVING A PASSION

For some students, those personal interests are entrenched enough that they come to high school with what people call a “passion” or a “thing.” In some cases, a student will take that passion and turn it into something more. If a student has been dancing for seven years and loves it, there’s an opportunity to deepen their involvement and ultimately take more initiative and have impact. For example, a student might decide to continue dancing competitively but also start to teach some dance classes. They’ve now taken their passion and are extending it.

Another student who has danced for seven years might say “I’m so tired of dance, I never want to dance again.” This can feel like a crisis for both the parent and the student because dance has been at the center of their lives for so many years. But remember: it isn’t that the student hated dance all those years and was wasting their time: they’re just stepping into who they are and how they want to express themselves. This shift is common, and rather than see it as a problem, you can view it as an opportunity. The student will always carry with them the incredible skills they learned in dance: discipline, working with people, creativity within bounds, and learning to take direction. But now they get to explore and bring those skills into other areas.

Still other students entering high school don’t have that “passion.” Instead, they’ve dabbled in a variety of activities: sports, camps, and other activities. Unfortunately, in our society, that feels like a red flag to parents—and sometimes even to kids. But we would argue that you don’t have to have a one “thing”—at least not when you’re 14 years old. We want to encourage (not push!) students to experiment and try new things. Leaving college admissions aside, it’s crucial for them as human beings because they get to try things out, explore what they like and don’t like, and engage with a variety of activities, topics, and people.

And it’s no surprise that engaged students are happier, more successful in school, and more likely to thrive and grow as individuals.



NURTURE INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY IN YOUR CHILD

One crucial aspect of engagement during high school is intellectual curiosity—when a student goes above and beyond the requirements of a class or dives deep into a subject on their own time. Here’s how adolescent psychologist Michael W. Austin defines intellectual curiosity:

The intellectually curious person has a deep and persistent desire to know. She asks and seeks answers to the “why” questions. And she doesn’t stop asking at a surface level, but instead asks probing questions in order to peel back layers of explanation to get at the foundational ideas concerning a particular issue.

Intellectual curiosity makes learning a lot more organic—and much less of a chore. And we know that colleges want to see it in students. Some colleges even ask specifically about it. For example, on their Common Application supplement, Stanford asks applicants: “Stanford students are widely known to possess a sense of intellectual vitality. Tell us about an idea or an experience you have had that you find intellectually engaging.”

So, as your teen’s first teacher, how do you awaken your student’s intellectual curiosity? Here are a few ideas:

1 ENCOURAGE THEM TO EMBRACE INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGES

Encourage your teen to explore subjects that interest them when selecting high school classes. Students who love math should challenge themselves with AP, IB, or other honors courses that will prepare them for advanced math in college. If your student enjoys languages, encourage them to choose one and study it to the highest level offered. And if your teen is curious about elective high school courses—from Philosophy or Psychology to Macroeconomics or Film—support them in diving into these subjects. High school is the perfect time to explore areas of interest while taking as challenging a course load as the student can handle while still earning excellent grades. Extracurricular and summer activities can also provide avenues for students to deepen their interests.

WHAT IF A STUDENT DREAMS OF BEING A UT AUSTIN LONGHORN?

Attending the University of Texas is an important goal for many of our students, particularly those whose family members attended and who grew up cheering for the Longhorns. Here are 4 ways to ensure you get the most out of your high school years.

- 1. Explore Majors Early:** 9th & 10th grade is the right time to start exploring majors based on your academic interests. What classes and learning experiences most excite you? If your student loves science, they might want to investigate STEM careers. Do they enjoy building things? Perhaps they should research engineering jobs. If they have an aptitude for writing, they could explore communications-related careers such as marketing or public relations.
- 2. Rigorous Coursework:** Taking the most rigorous possible (at least in the coursework that relates to possible majors) is important—another good way to explore majors. For example, it’s better in the early years to take an engineering or CS class, or business, health sciences, or art class to figure out if it’s truly an interest. Your student should aim for As in all their classes, and particularly those that relate to a potential major.
- 3. Leadership:** Your teen should start to explore activities that interest them, whether it’s debate, a sport, etc. with the goal of ultimately developing leadership in that area. Obviously, they won’t be the president of an organization freshman year, but by finding and sticking with an activity they love, they can set themselves up for leadership opportunities in upper grades. The most important tip is not to sit on the sideline and wait to get involved. Students should dive into activities in or outside of school early in high school.

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2 FIGURE OUT WHAT MAKES THEM TICK

Many high school students need a bit of time—and perhaps some guidance—to explore potential interests. In middle and high school, make space for your student to experiment with different possibilities for intellectual engagement. Encourage them to notice which activities or questions spark their interest, and then feed their curiosity with books, podcasts, documentaries, YouTube videos, music, projects, or any other medium that lets them plunge into their topic of choice.

Strive to be enthusiastic about your student's interests. You may have a vision of your child's future college, major, or career, but true intellectual curiosity ignites when a student has the chance to explore—in their own way—a subject that resonates with them. One of the most exciting things about nurturing your middle or high schooler's curiosity is that you never know where it may lead them.

“I personally have never seen a student that was not curious about something. I have seen many students who have suppressed their curiosity when they enter school to such an extent as to be nearly undetectable, but it is still there. Human beings are hardwired to be curious and being curious is a major activity of childhood and young adulthood.”

— Ben Johnson, author of *Teaching Students to Dig Deeper*

3 SUPPORT THEM IN BECOMING AN ACTIVE LEARNER

Being intellectually curious doesn't mean spending high school with your nose stuck in a textbook. Your teen may be the kind of person who learns best through participation in projects, experiments, or other hands-on activities. Active learners dive into hands-on activities that bring the concepts they're studying to life. Once they've found a topic they think about endlessly, help them find ways to engage—through classes, clubs, mentorship, research, volunteering, or a job—with people who share their interest.

WHAT IF A STUDENT DREAMS OF BEING A UT AUSTIN LONGHORN?

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4. Community Service: Early high school is an ideal time for students to think about community problems they might want to try to impact. If they care about animals, encourage them to volunteer at a local shelter. If they care about homelessness, have them volunteer with a nonprofit working in this area. The amount of community service hours is not the most important factor—it's increasing their focus and commitment to a specific area. Focusing on hours can be useful as a way to determine what areas resonate with you, but the hours themselves are not the goal.

By focusing on these four areas, not only will your student have a fulfilling high school experience, they will build a resume that supports their choice of major, a critical factor in UT admissions.





Here are a few examples of active learning:

- A student who excels at physics may nurture a budding interest in mechanical engineering by taking a summer job in an auto repair shop and learning how to revamp an internal combustion engine.
- A book lover with a passion for education might start a club that teaches literacy skills to underserved children.
- A student who is curious about diseases could do an independent research project with a mentor from their school or participate in research at a local university.

Students who challenge themselves intellectually, figure out what makes them tick, and engage in their fields of interest in high school gain a deeper sense of their priorities and values. This is excellent preparation for helping them choose a college and their eventual career.



WHAT IF MY STUDENT ISN'T INTERESTED IN ANYTHING?

Some students naturally gravitate toward activities that engage them and take initiative without needing any encouragement. Others seem glued to their phone or Xbox. If your student is struggling to find an activity beyond social media or video games, it can be helpful to start with their current inclinations. Here are four steps to jumpstart the process.

1 START WITH WHERE THEY ARE. Observe your teen with curiosity to see how they actually spend their time—note what seems to motivate them and what they're good at. After all, it's like they're interested in (or have aptitude in) something you're unfamiliar with. Take the time to ask them questions (perhaps while driving or getting an after-school treat!) to understand more about anything grasping their attention. As you actively listen, sharing their enthusiasm may open the door to more dialogue.

2 BRAINSTORM OTHER OUTLETS FOR THEIR EXPLORATION, AND CONNECT THEM WITH RESOURCES. Once you have an idea of what's capturing your student's attention, you can help them brainstorm ways to further these interests.

For example, if they're really enjoying the problem-solving aspect of video games, they might be interested in joining Destination Imagination. If they like world-building, they might be interested in taking a course on developing game concepts. If you can't get them off of Instagram or TikTok, maybe they would enjoy a social media internship or volunteer position with a local non-profit or organization. The key is to start with the root of their interest and build upon it.

3 DO THINGS AS A FAMILY. Doing things together as a family is a great way to help your student—and the whole family—engage in activities that they enjoy. For teens resistant to more formal activities, consider their role in the family and their interests at home. For example, if you have a teen who enjoys cooking, you might ask them to create the menu and cook the next time you have friends over. If your student is an excellent planner, invite them to help plan the next family trip.



Here are some other examples of simple ways families can help students build on their aptitudes and motivators.

- **Instagram fashionista:** Go thrift shopping together, and let your teen practice creating outfits for you. While you're out and about, help connect them with the owners of local boutiques. You could even encourage them to create a fashion-oriented blog or social media presence.
- **Animal lover:** Volunteer together at a local animal shelter or foster a pet together (the early teens are a great time to start nurturing empathy and advocacy).
- **Avid gamer:** Ask questions about the games they're enjoying and see if you can figure out what's engaging them most. Is it the strategy involved? The low-pressure social aspect? The technology of the game? Is it the problem-solving? The building? That can help you lead them to other activities with similar points of engagement. You can also help them build on their interests through family activities like video game conventions, or help them make connections in the industry to practice in-person interactions.
- **YouTube history buff:** Identify themed travel opportunities (even local ones), and encourage your student to document the landmarks or cultural institutions visited in an engaging way, such as through a blog, series of videos, or photo album.
- **TikTok artist:** Visit art museums and galleries together, and support them in posting their work on TikTok or other social media. You can also help connect them with local artists and classes.
- **Science enthusiast:** Watch YouTube videos or documentaries together, visit museums, and consider doing virtual research together through one of several organizations that offer this opportunity.
- **Mechanically-minded DIYer:** Involve your teen in projects around the house, such as building or repairs. You might also volunteer together with an organization that builds houses or wheelchair ramps.



- **Car fanatic:** Teach them about car maintenance (or sign up for a car repair basics class together) and have them take care of the family vehicles. Go to car shows together and meet like-minded people to connect with. Even restoring an old car together can be a rewarding experience to document.
- **Crafter:** Have them teach other family members how to do their favorite craft projects and identify an organization where they can donate them, such as making creative cards for seniors or knitting caps for newborn babies.
- **Baker:** Bake cookies or cupcakes together and bring them to friends, neighbors, or the local fire department. Create new recipes together, take a class, and maybe even make a collection of original recipes.

4 CELEBRATE YOUR TEEN'S WILLINGNESS TO TRY SOMETHING NEW. Your student may not like the first activity they try. That's okay—help them reflect on what specifically didn't resonate with them. For example, if taking a class didn't engage them, find out why. Was it the online format? Was the instructor too dry? Was it not social enough? Once you pinpoint the issue, you may be able to help your student find an opportunity that better aligns with their interests and needs. Above all, be positive, and encourage them to try something else.

Cultivating interests takes time. With your help to find the right outlet—and through exploration and reflection—your student will be able to identify new activities that deepen their current interest in a meaningful way.

HOW TO CULTIVATE A GROWTH MINDSET IN YOUR STUDENT

We like to remind students we work with that talent is not fixed. If they have an interest in a subject or activity that they're not naturally good at, we encourage them to try it out anyway. Stanford Psychology Professor Carol Dweck has conducted extensive research that shows that people who challenge themselves with activities or classes that don't come easily to them end up learning more critical "soft skills" (see sidebar) than those who see inevitable defeat and therefore avoid trying these activities.



DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS IN HIGH SCHOOL

As your student navigates from interest and involvement to initiative and impact, they'll also begin to cultivate so-called "soft skills" that will help them thrive in college and beyond. Here are the soft skills colleges and employers will value most.

Time management. From academics and community building to family life and career, time is always limited. Learning time management skills early will set students up for success.

Strong work ethic. Following rules, being punctual, producing quality work, and acting and communicating professionally will help students land jobs and thrive in their careers.

Adaptability. In our always-changing world, it's essential for students to learn to stay calm under pressure and be flexible in response to changing conditions.

Collaboration. Collaboration is more than just group projects. Throughout college and beyond, students will have to work well with others to achieve a common goal.

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Here are three easy ways you can help your teen develop a growth mindset:

- 1 MODEL A GROWTH MINDSET YOURSELF.** Try new things, and communicate to your child how you find the challenge exhilarating. If your child sees you learning something new — something you’ve previously struggled with — they’ll be more likely to imitate that kind of behavior.
- 2 TALK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS.** Review studies with your teens. Translate the scientific evidence for them. And **watch some of the powerful TED talks on growth mindset** with them. Then, talk to them about how they can apply this to their own life. If your adolescent has a fixed mindset — thinking they can’t grow in certain skills — it will be harder for them to take the subtle cues, so it’s important for you to help them figure out how to develop that growth mindset.
- 3 CHALLENGE THE INFORMATION THEY SEE EVERY DAY.** It’s easy for students to get caught up in the stereotypes and generalizations that come their way every day. “I can’t do X well because of my gender.” “I can’t do Y well because of my ethnicity.” Challenge these assumptions with your student, encouraging them to try to prove those assumptions wrong. One way to do this is to help your student identify role frameworks of people who broke those stereotypes. By seeing real examples of people who’ve used a growth mindset to overcome major obstacles, they’ll hopefully be inspired to do the same.

DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS IN HIGH SCHOOL

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Problem-solving. If students can persist through challenging situations by finding creative solutions, they’ll be better set up to thrive in their chosen career, no matter what it is.

Persuasion. The ability to influence a person’s or group’s attitudes or actions can help students have a real impact on any community they’re a part of.

Creativity. Coming up with original ideas and turning them into reality will be an asset in any situation, especially in their career.

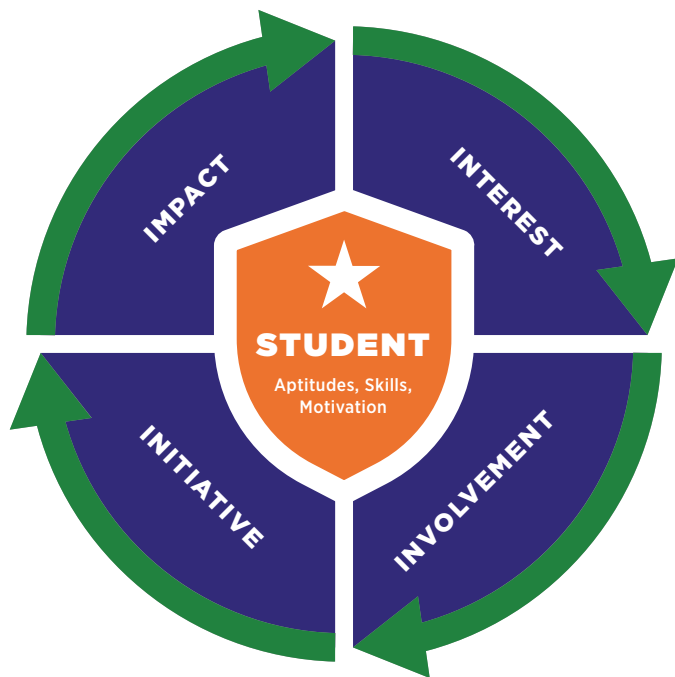
Self-advocacy. Making their voice heard and fighting for what they want — and what they feel is right — is something students will have to actively work on throughout their lives.

Public speaking. Many college classes require public speaking, and almost any career involves some form of it as well (even if it’s just in the interview process).

Listening skills. Focusing on the people and community around them — really listening to what they want and need — is an incredible way for students to deepen their involvement and create the potential for real impact.

THE i4 FRAMEWORK

In our work with hundreds of high schools students over the past 11 years, we've developed a simple framework that helps students develop, engage with, and showcase their unique interests while they enjoy the journey. We call it i4.



USING OUR i4 FRAMEWORK AS A GUIDE

According to **research from Gallup**, “Engaged students are 2.5 times more likely to say that they get excellent grades and do well in school, and they are 4.5 times more likely to be hopeful about the future than their actively disengaged peers.” To increase that engagement, we've developed a model that we call the i4 framework. Our i4 framework is simply a structured way for students to spark—and increase—their engagement in areas of **interest**, by increasing **involvement**, taking more **initiative**, and measuring the **impact**.

For younger students who haven't yet identified a specific area of interest, we've been inspired by the authors of *Designing Your Life*, who encourage **experiments**: trying new activities, community service, jobs, or other extracurricular opportunities.

Interest

What activities and subject areas spark your interest? How do you spend your time pursuing your interests? Are there additional ways you would like to explore your interests?

Involvement

What activities are you involved in outside of school? Which activities do you enjoy most? Are there activities you have wanted to try?

Initiative

How have you demonstrated initiative inside the classroom? Outside the classroom? Have you started or created a business, project, club, or organization?

Impact

How have you impacted your community or school? What legacy do you plan to leave your community or school? How have your activities impacted you?



With a **growth mindset**, your student should be able to try new things without feeling discouraged. Of course, if after giving it a try, your student realizes an activity is not for them, they should take that information into account and try something different. It's this type of experimenting in the first few years of high school that will eventually help your student narrow their interests.

Once a student finds something that truly interests them, they can deepen their involvement. One way to do this is by what *Designing Your Life* authors call **learning to ask for directions**: students must learn to ask for help and utilize mentors when figuring out how they might take an interest to the next level.

For example, if your student has developed an interest in beekeeping, they might research local biologists studying bees, write an email to one asking some questions, and perhaps even ask if a research internship is available. Becoming a self-advocate and knowing who to ask for help is a critical life skill, and it will help them experiment more and engage more deeply with their interests.

HOW STUDENT INVOLVEMENT CAN DEVELOP DURING THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

One of the best parts of the i4 framework is that it's circular in nature. A student may have involvement with very little interest, or they may be making an impact in an activity they did not initiate. The idea is to jump in, try things out, and participate. In other words—engage. Once they do that, all four I's will begin to develop in their own right.

To help start the process, we'll look at how engagement might develop throughout high school. As you read, remember: This is a loose plan and not a step-by-step guidebook. Every student is different and is on their own unique journey.

GETTING STARTED: INTEREST AND INVOLVEMENT

FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE YEARS. This is the time to explore! In 9th and 10th grade, your teen should start to explore activities that interest them, with the goal of ultimately developing leadership in that area. The most important thing is not to sit on the sidelines or wait to get involved.

6 WAYS TO HELP YOUR TEEN EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES

- 1. Take notice of interests.** Your student might be interested in something that they don't realize can be pursued further. A nudge in the right direction is always helpful.
- 2. Help them make connections.** You have a wider network than your student, so do what you can to help them make connections. Connect them to relatives, neighbors, employers, and local community experts, and encourage them to connect with their teachers, coaches, and other mentors.
- 3. Show enthusiasm.** The most important thing is that your student pursues activities they're interested in, so even if it's not what you would have chosen, be enthusiastic so they're encouraged to pursue it further.
- 4. Coach them through communications.** Your student is still learning how to write professional emails and make professional phone calls, so be sure to serve as a resource for them.
- 5. Allow the process to evolve.** The decisions your student makes at the beginning of the process might change as they experiment. Respect and encourage that kind of questioning so they don't end up pigeonholing themselves.
- 6. Have appropriate expectations.** Expect some meandering, and remember—your student is a teenager, and things might not always turn out how you expect.

One option is for your student to join school clubs, programs, or athletic teams in an area of interest. These are the more traditional options, and they're great if they appeal to your student. However, if those options don't grab your student's interest, hobbies and personal projects are a valuable means of gaining experience. Here are some other starting points:

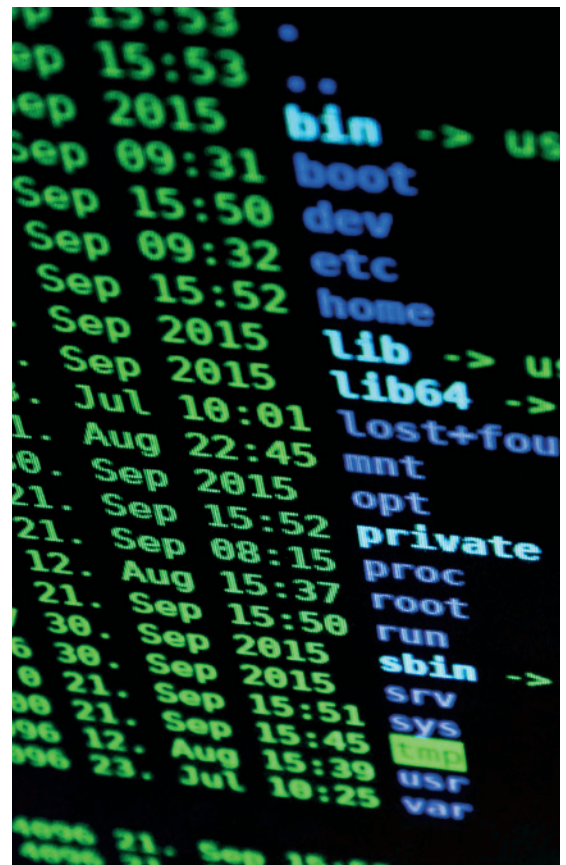
- Travel experiences
- Community retreats
- Small jobs (e.g., babysitting)
- Online classes
- Creative writing
- Summer programs and camps (including CIT programs)

Early high school is also an ideal time for students to think about community problems they might want to try to impact down the road. If your student cares about animals, encourage them to volunteer at a local shelter. If they care about homelessness, have them volunteer with a non-profit working in this realm.

JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS. If your student has identified an area of interest, they can explore ways to deepen their involvement through a leadership position, a part-time job, or an internship. Students gain valuable experience from researching, applying to, and interviewing for jobs or internships. Other valuable activities include academic research and independent projects that allow students to begin creating a portfolio of work. This can be especially impactful on college applications, even as potential essay topics.

Let your student's curiosity lead the way. If your teen has an interest in biology, pursuing an internship in a lab might help them further understand the applications of that research to a future career. If your student is really enjoying a history course, encourage them to do some independent research and explore a historical topic that intrigues them. The key is for students to develop and show their intellectual curiosity.

Some students develop clear interests earlier in their high school careers, while some take a little longer. Your student can jumpstart an interest at any time—just be sure to encourage their exploration along the way.



WHEN INTERESTS DEEPEN: INITIATIVE AND IMPACT

Participation is a great start, and we encourage it throughout high school. But by junior or senior year, there's an opportunity to take it a step further. Many students find that they develop greater skills and confidence by increasing the initiative they take within their activities and by strengthening the impact of their involvement. The key here is that the student scales up their initiative and impact over the course of their high school career.

INITIATIVE. Demonstrating initiative often involves starting with an idea and then taking steps to make it a reality. Traditionally, we might think of initiative as founding a club or starting a new school program. And while those and other formal leadership roles certainly do the trick, there are other ways to show initiative. The key is to turn ideas into actions, no matter the context. Here are a few examples:

- Proposing a service project to fellow club members and then reaching out to the organization to coordinate student service
- Making a new playlist and dance routine to add some fun into the daily team warm-up
- Organizing a study group for a particularly tough AP exam and setting a weekly agenda to keep everyone on track
- Moving from journal writing to starting a creative writing blog
- Creating a neighborhood summer camp for kids
- Stepping up to a leadership role in a youth group
- Working with a teacher to create an independent study project in an area of interest
- Coaching younger kids (or being a referee) in a sport they love
- Organize a cheek swabbing event for the local organ donation charity

IMPACT. To identify what impact your student is having, ask yourself: "What is different because of my student's involvement/ideas/questions?" Especially if your student is considering selective schools, impact will be really important to show their depth of engagement.

Revisiting the examples of initiative, let's look at what their impact might be:

- The proposed service project led to ten new members joining the club (thus increasing the potential future impact of service projects)

WHAT IF A STUDENT IS FOCUSED ON A SELECTIVE COLLEGE?

Given the media's emphasis on college rankings, many high school students are often attracted to selective schools. If your student is already talking about wanting to attend these colleges, where admissions rates are in the single digits, here's how you can support them in their quest. Encourage them to:

- 1. Be Curious:** Students should not only be active participants in their learning at school — taking the most rigorous coursework and aiming for As — but also dive into topics of interest more deeply outside of school. Let your student's curiosity lead the way. Over their high school career, students aiming for highly selective schools should take the initiative to complete projects, enter competitions, or apply for career opportunities, and join teams that relate to their interests.
- 2. Focus on Community Impact:** Determining and exploring what your student cares about in the larger world will help her find ways to engage in your community and beyond through volunteering, advocacy, or other involvement. In 9th and 10th grades, students can start small — in the community around them. For example, if your student has an interest in languages, she could practice her speaking skills by volunteering at a local community organization that needs people to communicate in that language. As they get into upper grades, it will be important to take more initiative so they can have a greater impact. For example, your student interested in languages might work with an organization to start a program (and recruit volunteers) to teach ESL to newly arrived refugee children. The key here is to scale up their initiative and impact over the course of their high school career.

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- Team morale increased, and the team went on to come in second in the state championships that year
- Students in the AP study group all scored 4 or 5 on their exams
- The blog has gained 1,000 followers
- 20 kids signed up for the neighborhood summer camp
- The youth group participated in a service project that the student organized
- The independent study project turned into a potential career interest
- Parents of the kids they coached wrote a card describing the positive impact your student had on them
- 100 people signed up to become organ donors

Of course, initiative won't always lead to impact—and that's okay—but be sure to follow through on your student's actions and encourage them to highlight their impact whenever possible.

I4 IN THE REAL WORLD: 6 STUDENTS' STORIES

FROM ICE CREAM SCOOPER TO MARKETING MAJOR:

Jenny worked at a local ice cream store as an expert ice cream scooper (and dishwasher) the summer of 10th grade through junior spring, when Jenny's boss promoted her to city-wide ice cream merchandiser in local grocery stores. This experience sparked her curiosity about how her case displays impacted sales, leading to her interest in (and eventual college major in) marketing.

ON THE PATH TO A CURE: Jason knew he wanted to be a doctor since he was a small child. In 9th grade, he started volunteering at a local hospital welcoming patients. Before junior year, he attended a prestigious summer medical program, where he connected with the students from all over the world who shared his interest in medicine. Through networking during that program, he landed an internship in cancer research at the local teaching hospital the next summer.

ONE INTERN'S UNEXPECTED OUTCOME: Lauren was convinced she wanted to be an engineer, so the summer after her freshman year, she obtained an internship (with the help of her parents) at a local engineering firm. Her internship involved getting

WHAT IF A STUDENT IS FOCUSED ON A SELECTIVE COLLEGE?

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3. Develop Life Skills. To prepare for selective schools, a student must demonstrate a willingness to go the extra mile. This includes some of the more mundane but necessary skills that every successful student needs. Your top life skill is time management. From academics to curiosity to community building, time is always limited, for students and professionals alike.

In addition, you will need to learn things like public speaking, debate, listening, self-advocacy, speed reading, and more. Maybe you will only need to pick up two or three of these skills, but successful candidates have certainly mastered a few of them. Pick some of these so-called "soft skills" that may help you in your future, and think about how you can cultivate them for college success.



coffee and delivering mail in addition to observing engineering meetings. Lauren also had the opportunity to interview many of the engineers. Much to her surprise, her internship led her to realize that engineering was *not* for her; she discovered she had a greater interest in business. Her college essay focused on “why I’m not an engineer.”

THE GENEROUS MATH TUTOR: John was the go-to person in his class for homework help, so he decided to start a blog for classmates, showing how to work on difficult math problems. Soon he started getting followers from all over the world. Over time, John began to give overall advice to fellow students on study tips in addition to math problems, leading to hundreds of students achieving better grades.

COMBINING TWO INTERESTS = CASH! Katie loved to shop online thrift sites. She also discovered a passion for photography during a 10th grade art elective. She had the idea to start a business where she bought clothes at thrift stores and then photographed them. In a short amount of time, Katie exceeded her goal of selling \$2,000 in clothes. She put this money toward a new camera and equipment so she could continue expanding her business.

CODING CAMP COUNSELOR: James was an amazing computer programmer who had taught himself a variety of programming languages. While most of James’ computer science peers were going to fancy computer camps, James decided he wanted to practice his Spanish skills and teach coding to children locally. After securing a camp counselor position, he asked the camp director if he could teach a coding class. The director was delighted, and the coding class became one of the highlights of the camp that summer.





ACTIVITY EXPERIMENT PLANNER

6-word title: _____



STEP-BY-STEP PLAN

Step 1: _____

Complete by: _____

Step 2: _____

Complete by: _____

Step 3: _____

Complete by: _____

Step 4: _____

Complete by: _____

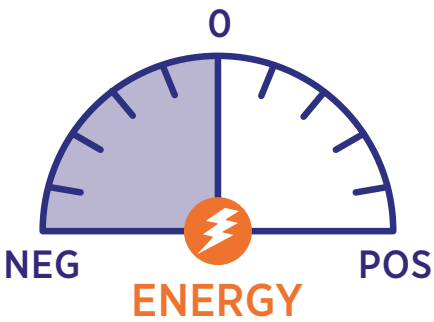


ACTIVITY EXPERIMENT PLANNER

Step 5: _____

Complete by: _____

Who to ask for directions:



Worksheet adapted from *Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-lived, Joyful Life* by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans



COLLEGE MATCHPOINT

The team at College MatchPoint has developed a set of tools and resources to help students and families successfully navigate the college admissions process. We are committed to helping all students thrive in their selected college, and the first step is reducing the stress of the admissions process for students and parents alike.

With that in mind, we've used our team's expertise—developed over years of working with students, parents, and college admissions officers—to create a library of free resources that you can use as you navigate the college journey.

WWW.COLLEGEMATCHPOINT.COM

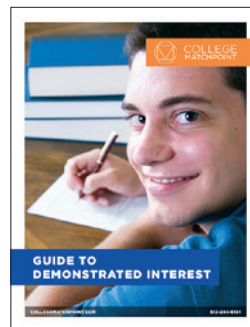
FREE RESOURCES



Guide to Summer Planning

For many of today's college-bound high school students, the summer is no longer nine weeks of total relaxation, but rather an opportunity to spend time actively working, learning new skills, or diving deeper into an area (or areas) of interest. This complete guide to summer planning walks you through the various types of summer opportunities—from volunteer work to independent projects, and everything in between—and offers tips for how your student can take their involvement up a notch during the summer.

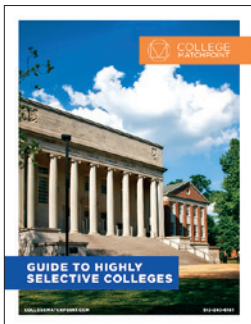
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Guide To Demonstrated Interest

Demonstrated interest is the degree to which you show a college that you are sincerely interested in attending their school. It has become an important, subtle tool that colleges use to efficiently and accurately enroll a specific target number of students each year. This guide offers tips on showing demonstrated interest no matter your personality type, and we provide some examples of emails and conversation starters to use with admissions representatives.

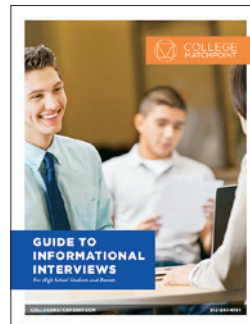
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Guide To Highly Selective Colleges

Applying to a highly selective college can be daunting, but if your student has their heart set on one, there are some guidelines they can follow to help them stand out from the crowd. This guide discusses what highly selective colleges look for in students, how to achieve “depth” in activities, and the importance of having a specific application strategy for the most selective schools.

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Guide to Informational Interviews

This worksheet will help your student prepare for their informational interviews. It offers space to jot down potential questions and provides structure for taking notes during the interviews and following up after.

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Guide To Campus Tours

Touring colleges can be a great way to get a feel for what a specific school is like, but because these visits are brief, it's crucial to go into them prepared. In this guide, we provide a college tour checklist, a list of not-to-be-missed campus destinations, and tips for making the most of your college visits. With this guide in hand, you can focus on taking advantage of this special time together with your student.

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Guide to Exploring College Majors

Choosing a major is an exciting journey, and it's one to go into prepared—the choice of major will not only determine what they study for the next four years, but also has the potential to impact the rest of the student's likelihood of admissions to many schools. This guide offers suggestions for how to navigate the process, important stats about majors and their career tracks, information about how a major choice will affect your student's high school years, and much more.

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