

# Middle School Instructor's Guide Lesson Plans for Counselors and Teachers



Middle School  
Student Workbook

Use this guide  
as a lesson plan  
companion to the  
Middle School  
Student Workbook.



WITHIN REACH ... WITHIN YOU

# Lesson Plan Instructions

No matter the circumstances—straight As or all Cs, first-generation or third-generation college student, rural or urban—driven and dedicated students can attend a university, college or technical school and be well on their way to great careers.

The following lesson plans are intended to help you help your students get to college. Each lesson is designed to accompany the Middle School Student Workbook, which includes information about identifying interests and careers, types of colleges, the importance of college, goal setting, study habits and paying for college.

Here are some lesson plan guidelines to help you get started.

## *Before you begin each lesson:*

1. Read the lesson goal and objectives.
2. Gather materials: Student Workbooks, lesson plan and any relevant handouts.
3. Read and review the corresponding section in the Middle School Student Workbook.

## *Welcome everyone:*

Welcome your students and thank them for taking an interest in their future.

## *Introduce yourself and any other partners:*

Introduce yourself and tell them how a college education has made a difference in your life or in the life of someone you know.

## *Go over the instructions for the day:*

The following rules should be observed by everyone attending the session.

- There's no such thing as a silly or stupid question.
- Always show respect to the person speaking, whether it's you, another presenter or a student sharing information.
- Stay on topic with questions and answers.
- Sensitive and personal questions should wait until after the session.
- Participation and questions are encouraged, but you won't be forced to take part.
- Have fun and learn!

## *Start with an Ice Breaker:*

Choose an ice breaker that will motivate your students to think about college. Here's an example:

Ask students to pick one item from their pocket, purse, wallet or body (jewelry, belt, etc.) and explain to the class how that item will help them plan and prepare for college. For instance, an ink pen helps them practice their admission essay; glasses help them see the board so they can take good notes during class.

## *Workbook Content:*

How to handle the Student Workbook is up to you. You can encourage students to read the content and fill in the worksheets prior to the class period or during the session. The workbook can be read silently or aloud during class.

## *Estimated time needed to complete each lesson:*

45-50 minutes

# Lesson Plan 1: Where Am I Headed?

## Goal

Some of your students have no doubt about going to college. They've been raised in a college-going environment from the day they were born. On the other hand, you probably have students who don't think they can go to school for various reasons. Some may be on the fence about attending and some may be 100 percent against higher education. Understanding where your students are coming from can help you support them as they develop plans for the future.

This lesson will help students see how their talents and strengths can be strong indicators of what they may enjoy in future careers. It will introduce them to interest groups, help them identify their own interests and show them how their interests could lead to rewarding careers.

## Student Workbook Content

### Where Am I Headed?

Ask your students to complete the *Where Am I Headed?* worksheet in their Student Workbooks. After students have tabulated their scores in each interest group, emphasize that no group is any better or any more important than the others. The purpose of the activity is simply to help them start thinking about their strengths and interests.

Now ask: "In your strongest interest group, did you see a possible career that you might enjoy?" Ask them if they think the careers they picked will require education beyond high school. Discuss various career options, giving the students information about the education required for each one. For more information about different careers and their educational requirements, see the *Degree vs. On-the-Job Training* chart on Page 10 of the Student Workbook.

### Parent Activity

Remind students that these are general guidelines and you don't expect them to decide on a definite career today. The activity they've just done is only intended to get them thinking about their lives after high school and help them recognize the need for a plan. Encourage students to take their surveys home to show their parents. If parents are present, allow time for parents and students to discuss the interest group survey and explore possible career options together.

### Wrap-Up

It's common for middle school students to feel like they don't fit in at school. They may see college as an extension of middle school and high school, where they'll be expected to conform to a typical mold, rather than an opportunity to choose a place that fits their personal and educational needs. When talking to your students, use positive terms and focus on what they can gain from higher education. Encourage them to focus on their interests and abilities and to think about what they want.

# Lesson Plan 2: Why Should I Go?

## Goal

Some middle school students know what career path they'll choose, but most haven't given it that much thought. Currently, the majority of jobs in the U.S. require some level of education and training beyond high school. It's important that students realize their career opportunities will be much more limited without some form of postsecondary education. For those who will be first-generation college students, this may seem like more of an obstacle than you might first believe.

This section will help students identify and address their concerns about college, and it will show them the benefits of higher education.

## Student Workbook Content

### College? Why Not?

Ask your students to complete the *College? Why Not?* activity in their Student Workbooks by circling each statement that reflects a thought they've had about going to college. Students can also write additional comments on the lines provided. Possible responses to the concerns listed on the handout are given below.

#### **I don't like school, so why go to college?**

That's a pretty common question for many students, but it shouldn't stop you from considering college. You'll have a lot more freedom in college to choose your own classes, professors, schedules and other activities. Most people who have been to college will tell you that it was a very positive experience and very different from middle school and high school.

#### **I don't know what I want to do after high school.**

Most middle school students don't know what they'll be doing after high school. In fact, most college freshmen haven't fully decided on a major, let alone a career! College is the perfect time to explore likes, dislikes and talents. You can take a wide variety of classes and explore different options, and all the while you'll be learning a lot about yourself.

#### **I'm just in middle school—why think about college now?**

It's never too early to prepare for college. This is the best time for you to develop good reading skills and study habits that will ensure your success in high school and college. It's important to take classes now that will give you an edge in high school. You may also be able to enroll in the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program as early as the eighth grade.

#### **No one in my family has ever gone to college, so why should I?**

College can be scary, but it can also be very exciting. Imagine what an impact you can make on your family and future generations by being the first one to go to college! You could be opening doors for many people—even your parents!

#### **What if I don't fit in?**

There are many different types of colleges to choose from right here in Oklahoma. No two colleges are the same. You can "shop around" to find the college that's best for you. Would you rather attend a college that's big or small? Close by or far away? There's a school out there somewhere that has what you want.

### *Parent Activity*

Encourage students to ask their parents what made them decide to go, or not to go, to college. If parents are present, allow time for parents to discuss their college experiences with their children. Parents can also ask what careers their children have already considered.

### **Give It To Me Straight. What IS College?**

Read the definition of college in the Student Workbook and point out the list of college types on Page 8 of the Student Workbook.

### **What Does Your Future Hold?**

Now, go over the following top reasons to go to college:

- *Explore new opportunities.* College opens doors to new experiences, new people and new ideas. It provides new social opportunities and chances to get involved in surrounding communities, or even in activities that could have a worldwide impact.
- *Knowledge is power.* College graduates express themselves more clearly in speech and in writing. Their knowledge in many subjects enables them to be valuable resources to others.
- *Increase your job security.* College graduates are more likely to be employed than high school graduates. (College Board: Education Pays, 2010; based on the most recent U.S. Census figures)
- *Earn more money over your lifetime.* On average, college graduates make a lot more money during their working years than those who graduated from high school alone.

Be ready to discuss some of the opportunities that you explored in college.

### **Let's Be Practical: Money Talks!**

Walk your students through this section of the Student Workbook together or assign it as homework so that students can discuss it with their parents at home. If discussing this in class, discuss the average monthly cost of living in Oklahoma:

- Groceries - \$500
- Car Payment - \$500
- Rent/House Payment - \$800
- Utilities - \$1640
- Cellphone - \$150
- **TOTAL - \$2,110**

### *Wrap-Up*

Distribute copies of the *Degree vs. On-the-Job Training* handout. Point out the differences between salaries earned by people who have degrees versus people who have jobs that require only on-the-job training. Emphasize that you're not trying to tell them they must have a degree to be happy or successful. They should pursue careers that will bring them a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. The focus on money was merely a chance for students to see what it will take to make ends meet in the "real world" and to show them higher education is one way to increase their income over time.

# Lesson Plan 3: Where Do I Start?

## Goal

In the last session, students' eyes were opened to what it might take to make ends meet when they are adults. This may have caused concern to some of the students, especially if their families struggle from month to month. Make sure you keep a positive tone in today's session as you cover goal-setting and planning for their futures. Remind them they have the power to choose the direction their lives will take.

This section will show students how to set goals and how to monitor their own progress as they work toward those goals. It will introduce the SMART goals concept and explain healthy study habits to help them improve study time and grades.

## Student Workbook Content

### SMART Goals, A-MAZE-ing Results

Go through each of the five elements of a SMART goal, using the examples provided. After the content has been covered, ask students to come up with one or two more examples of a goal that can be achieved using the SMART method. Ask them if they think they can leave out any of the five elements and still be able to reach their goals.

Ask your students to think of a specific goal they would like to reach. Instruct them to write down ways to make their goal specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based, using the blanks provided. They can use the savings example provided in the text as a starter, if needed. Instruct students to write their goal at the top of the maze. Starting at the bottom left corner, students should work through the maze. Once they have found their way through, they should mark the correct path, then write possible obstacles in the "dead ends" along the way (didn't study for a test, injured during soccer practice, etc.) Explain that as simple as all of this may seem, the maze is a great visual that shows what it will take to keep their goals in sight and to change directions when things don't go quite the way they planned.

### *Parent Activity*

Instruct students to discuss their goals with their parents and ask about goals they have set. Were they able to achieve their goals? What challenges did they face? Did they have to make sacrifices? What were the rewards? If parents are present, encourage students to ask them about their past and present goals.

### Study Habits

Show your students the connection between working to achieve their goals and developing good study habits now. Briefly go through the 10 study habits with the group. You may want to enlist different volunteers to read the 10 habits aloud. Encourage students to pick one or two study habits from the list that they will focus on this week to get more benefit from their study time. Tell them you will ask them to report their experiences at the next session—what worked, and what didn't?

### *Parent Activity*

Send *The Perfect 10 Study Habits* handout home with your students and tell them to go through it with their parents. Encourage them to ask for their parents' suggestions for improving their study time. If parents are present, ask them to discuss ways they can help their children improve their study habits. Helping children eliminate distractions or reading questions to quiz them for a test are good examples.

### *Wrap-Up*

Encourage students to keep their mazes in a safe place and remind them it's important to look at their long-range goals often in order to stay on track. Also, remind them to focus on one or two of the study habits that were introduced today, and to be ready to give a verbal report at the next session.



# Lesson Plan 4: How Do I Get There?

## Goal

This lesson will cover the resources available to students as they plan for college and beyond. Remember that many middle school students convince themselves they aren't college material before they've given it much thought. Our goals are to affirm that they CAN go to college and to cultivate ideas that will translate their desire to go to college into a reality.

This section will show students that it's not too early to begin thinking about going to college. Students will be given basic information about the financial aid options available to help them pursue higher education. It will also show students the value of a college savings account and encourage students to do whatever it takes to make their dreams come true.

## Student Workbook Content

### The Road from Middle School to High School and The Road from High School to College

Give students time to read both segments on Page 15 of the Student Workbook. Be prepared to give information about classes offered in middle school and high school that will best prepare them for college.

If a college student is present, this may be a good time for him or her to speak for a few minutes about college life. Be sure to allow time for questions from your students. Ask students to write down two or three college choices on the lines provided in the Student Workbook. If parents are present, allow time for discussion between parents and students before joining the conversation.

### Parent Activity

Instruct students to write down the names of a few schools they may like to attend and why they are interested in those colleges. Ask students to discuss these ideas with their parents and visit [OKcollegestart.org](http://OKcollegestart.org) to further research each school's costs and entrance requirements.

### Paying for College

1. *Save whatever you can.* Briefly cover the information about Oklahoma 529 College Savings Plans. Some students may wonder if they can use their 529 funds at an out-of-state college. Beneficiaries of 529 plans can use the funds at thousands of eligible colleges nationwide and abroad. Point out the charts that show how savings can grow over time, and explain how compounded interest works.
2. *Learn all you can about financial aid.* Explain that most college students need some type of financial aid. Mention the four general categories of aid that are listed, and briefly go over the definitions from Page 18 of the Student Workbook.
3. *Apply for scholarships.* Explain that scholarships are considered free money because students don't have to pay them back. You can also direct them to Page 19 in the Student Workbook and point out the list of several scholarship websites.

Be sure to mention many colleges have their own scholarships, which they award to students for various reasons, especially to incoming freshmen. Be ready to answer questions about Oklahoma's Promise.

Advise students to give information about Oklahoma's Promise to their parents, including the appropriate website, [okpromise.org](http://okpromise.org). Some students may assume their families make too much money to qualify for this program, but tell them only their parents will know for sure. Stress that students are first able to apply for Oklahoma's Promise in the 8th grade, but they can also apply in the 9th or 10th grade. Applications postmarked after June 30 at the end of their sophomore year will not be accepted. Oklahoma's Promise scholarship funds must be used at approved colleges within the state of Oklahoma.

### Parent Activity

Ask students to discuss college savings plans with their parents. They should discuss how much they've decided to save each month, and see if their parents would be interested in setting up a savings plan together.

### Wrap-Up

Advise students to keep their Student Workbooks, since the list of websites in this section can be used for scholarship searches later on. Stress that it's not too early (or too late) to develop the study habits necessary to earn the grades they'll need for college scholarships. Allow time to complete the *Test Your Knowledge* quiz.

### Answers to the *Test Your Knowledge* Quiz

1. B 2. E 3. J 4. H 5. A 6. C 7. L 8. G 9. I 10. D

Remind students that every one of them has a fan club full of people devoted to helping them achieve their goals and fulfill their dreams, and that you're one of their fans. Leave them with positive feelings about going to college and remind them how to find the resources they need to learn more about planning, preparing and paying for college.

## Additional Resources:



[startwithfafsa.org](http://startwithfafsa.org)



Oklahoma College Assistance Program



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