

Counselor Talking Points: Identifying Student Plans for College

Engaging middle school students to talk about their future can be a challenging endeavor. Although your students are far too diverse to be truly categorized, we've identified three common reactions students might have to attending college:

- I'm going to college!
- I might go to college.
- Am I really college material?

Consider using the following sets of talking points to help identify fears, expectations and misconceptions students may face regarding college. The questions provided will help students open up and talk about their wants and needs related to higher education.



I'm going to college!

Some students know they'll continue their education after high school. Here are some ideas to assist students in their decision-making process.

- What are your interests?
- What do you want to do when you grow up?
- What kind of school are you and your parents looking for?
- Discuss classes and activities students are currently involved in to see if they're a good fit for their goals. Be ready to suggest any options that you believe would support their plans for college.
- Encourage students to give their parents information about the Oklahoma 529 College Savings Plan. Have students visit [OK4Saving.org](https://www.ok4saving.org) to learn more.
- Discuss eligibility requirements for the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship. Encourage students to talk to their parents about the program. More information can be found at [okpromise.org](https://www.okpromise.org).
- Emphasize the importance of developing good study habits now to help students prepare for more challenging classes in high school.
- Encourage students to visit [OKcollegestart.org](https://www.okcollegestart.org).
- Advise students to ask questions and gather as much information as possible. [UCanGo2.org](https://www.ucango2.org) is a great source of information about planning, preparing and paying for college.

Resources to hand out:

- » OSRHE's *What's Your Plan for College?* booklet, Grades 8-10
- » *Oklahoma 529 College Savings Plan* enrollment brochure
Visit [OK4Saving.org](https://www.ok4saving.org) for contact information
- » *Oklahoma's Promise* flyer
Visit [okpromise.org](https://www.okpromise.org) for contact information

I might go to college.

Some students are considering college after high school, but may be hesitant to make a definitive choice. As their counselor, you can help them identify their concerns and create a more positive impression of higher education.

- What are your interests?
- What do you want to do in life?
- What are your goals after high school?
- What might keep you from going to college?
- When is the right time to talk about going to college?
- Discuss eligibility requirements for the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship. Encourage students to talk to their parents about the program, and emphasize that they can enroll in the program in eighth grade. Encourage them to visit okpromise.org.
- Encourage students to give their parents information about the Oklahoma 529 College Savings Plan. Have students visit OK4Saving.org to learn more.
- Emphasize the importance of developing good study habits now to help students prepare for more challenging classes in high school.
- Encourage students to visit OKcollegestart.org.
- Advise your student to ask questions and gather as much information as possible. UCanGo2.org is a great source of information about planning, preparing and paying for college.

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Visit okpromise.org for contact information
- » *Degree vs. On-the-Job Training* chart available at UCanGo2.org/Publications.html

Am I really college material?

Some middle school students have never considered attending college. There are many influences that can discourage a college-bound mindset; three of the major influences are listed below:

- » They may be struggling in school and believe they're not smart enough to go to college.
- » They may have been told by friends or family members they're not "college material."
- » They may be "first generation" college students and may believe their paths will be the same as their parents'.

Fortunately, there are many options for higher education, such as four-year universities, two-year colleges, technology centers and proprietary or trade schools. Help students explore all the possibilities for education after high school.

- What are your interests?
- What do you want to do in life?
- What are your skills? How can you use those skills in a job or career?
- Think about some schools that might offer courses or certificates associated with the students' interests and skills. Help students research how these schools might help them meet future goals. Encourage them to keep track of schools that are of particular interest.
- Ask students if they've talked to their parents about going to college. What are their parents thoughts or concerns? Would their parents be supportive if they enrolled in school?
- Advise students that financial aid is available to everyone, regardless of family income. Direct them to UCanGo2.org for information about planning, preparing and paying for college.
- Discuss the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program eligibility requirements. Encourage students to talk to their parents about the program, and remind them to enroll in the program in the 8th, 9th or 10th grade at okpromise.org.
- Encourage students to give their parents information about the Oklahoma 529 College Savings Plan. Have them visit OK4Saving.org to learn more.
- Emphasize the importance of developing good study habits now to help students prepare for more challenging classes in high school.

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