



College and Continued Learning

Taking the Ultimate Road Trip to High-Tech Success

Do you have a special place at home or work where you pin up reminders of motivational messages? You know, one-liners such as "Anything worth doing is worth doing well " or "Just do it." You might want to consider making room for one or two more: "College is the best way to prepare for a high-tech career" and "Continuing education is the real key to career success."

The fact of the matter is that all 21st-century workers will be expected to expand their knowledge and sharpen their skills by continuing their education throughout their lives. "you and your child will need to keep learning for the rest of your lives."

Some popular means of continuing education include on-the-job training, seminars, workshops, college courses, and certification, among others. Your child may want to look into summer jobs, internships, or co-ops to connect his or her academic skills to the world of work.

"College graduates now earn 76% more than those who don't go to college."

Secretary of Education Richard Riley

It's vital that middle schoolers have an accurate picture of the educational paths they'll follow to reach high school, college, and ultimately, career success. The following statistics from the U.S. Department of Education demonstrate that they'll need your help to see the real picture. Fifty to 66 percent of eighth graders planned on completing college but...

Only 25 percent planned on taking any college preparatory courses.

Only 26 percent were learning the relationship between courses and career options.

Only 49 percent were learning about the vocational courses offered in their high schools.

A bachelor's degree—often in a math-or science-related field—is one of the best ways to prepare for a high-tech career. Even students who major in non-technical subjects will need to take some computer courses. A recent report by the National Research Council

states that all undergraduate students, regardless of their major areas of study, should be required to take courses in science, math, engineering, or technology.

Yet the American Electronics Association reports that the number of students graduating with high-tech degrees is falling!

Another path to consider is network certification-an alternative route to high-tech careers. It doesn't require a four-year degree. Certification can be obtained from major networking companies such as Microsoft or Novell. It demonstrates that the person understands how to manage the intricacies of computer networks.

Over the next ten years, increasing numbers of colleges and technical institutes will offer certification courses. Today, some high schools even offer certification classes as part of their curricula!

The Department of Education has identified the kinds of coursework that will prepare middle school students well for college or other advanced study:

- English
- Science
- History or geography
- Challenging math courses, starting with algebra and geometry in eighth or ninth grade
- Arts or music and a foreign language

DID YOU KNOW?

- The following factors seem to improve students' odds of both going to and graduating from college:
- Having parents who expect that their children will go to college and who encourage their children to expect that, too.
- Having several friends in their peer group who also expect to go to college.
- Planning for college early, well in advance of filling out an application, by talking to college admissions officers and researching financial aid (often during sophomore year in high school).
- Taking challenging coursework. For example, students who take algebra and geometry in middle school are much more likely to go on to college than students who do not.

Help your child begin to develop a plan for high school. Sketch out a career plan with your child. Although it may seem too early, it's not; middle schoolers are ready to learn how to plan for their futures. Planning can start with a simple conversation about your child's dreams. Use this opportunity to help him or her think about the educational steps that lead to that "dream" career.