Emphasis on reading and maintaining college aspirations is just as important in middle school as it was in elementary school. You can also prepare for college early by following these tips:

When your child registers for middle school, make an appointment with a counselor to discuss your family’s college aspirations and to make sure your child is enrolled in the classes that offer the best preparation for high school. Ask what resources and extracurricular activities support such aspirations in the middle school.

Because they may move between classes and have to meet the expectations of five or more teachers, middle school students often juggle more complex schedules than they did in elementary school. Teach your child to use an hourly calendar to account for his or her time each day. Make sure to pencil in the fun stuff, too.

Peer pressure becomes an issue in middle school, but it can often be positive. Encourage your child’s friendships with other children who have college aspirations. Offer to host a study group before a test or encourage your child to work with another student on a project at your home. If your children always have friends over to your house, you will not have to worry about them being at other homes.

Keep setting a good example for your children by pursuing additional education or training for yourself. If you are not familiar with a subject that your student is studying, ask them to explain it to you. Not only will you show that you’re interested in learning, but teaching the material to you, will deepen your child’s understanding of that material. Or, ask your child to help you research a topic you’re interested in at the local library.

Talk to teachers and counselors about your child’s achievement in math. The strongest schedule for university preparation is to take Algebra in the 8th grade and Geometry in the 9th grade; strong math achievement in 7th grade is necessary for your child to be prepared for this plan. This grade is considered by experts to be the most socially difficult for children. Be aware of any problems your child may be having with classmates and contact counselors for support if these problems are affecting your child’s academic performance or enthusiasm for school. The hope is that the avenues of communication that you established with your children in elementary school, will allow for open communication of difficult subjects in middle and high school.

Remember to discuss the “difficult” topics, and to find resources (counselors, teachers, family members) that might make these conversations less difficult. Research has shown that middle school students who believe they have a variety of career options have higher self-esteem and do better in school. Notice what your child likes to do and research related careers that your child may not have considered before (for example, children who like sports might be interested in a career in sports medicine, sports equipment design, or as an agent, a newscaster/journalist, etc.). Explore summer enrichment programs offered by the city or a university. Apply early in the spring and if cost is a barrier ask about financial assistance.

This last year before high school is a crucial academic year since all future grades will be considered in college admission and scholarship awards. Encourage your child to aim for all As and Bs this year. If necessary, make sure your child attends summer school to catch up before entering high school.

Attend college information sessions to make sure you have current information about entrance requirements and different forms of financial aid, or arrange to visit a local university. Research at least two or three colleges of interest (libraries, school counselors, and the internet are good sources of information). Find out what the entrance requirements are; what areas the school is particularly strong in; what facilities, clubs or other resources related to your child’s interests are available; how much it costs to attend and what types of aid are available. Help your child make a chart comparing these options. Take your child with you to work for a day, or help them arrange to shadow a professional in a field they are interested in for a few hours.

Don’t let the cost of a college education scare you away. Many types of financial aid are available. Visit your counselor to discuss how to finance your college education.

College Planning Tips and Recommendations

Grade 6

Emphasis on reading and maintaining college aspirations is just as important in middle school as it was in elementary school. You can also prepare for college early by following these tips:

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Grade 7

Talk to teachers and counselors about your child’s achievement in math. The strongest schedule for university preparation is to take Algebra in the 8th grade and Geometry in the 9th grade; strong math achievement in 7th grade is necessary for your child to be prepared for this plan. This grade is considered by experts to be the most socially difficult for children. Be aware of any problems your child may be having with classmates and contact counselors for support if these problems are affecting your child’s academic performance or enthusiasm for school. The hope is that the avenues of communication that you established with your children in elementary school, will allow for open communication of difficult subjects in middle and high school.

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Don’t let the cost of a college education scare you away. Many types of financial aid are available. Visit your counselor to discuss how to finance your college education.

College.

It’s not a dream. It’s a plan.

To keep your options open and plan for college, you should take these courses in high school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Years Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab Science</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Get started now! Explore different opportunities for college with your counselor. Be sure to ask about specific admissions requirements at the college of your choice.

IT STARTS WITH U

GET THE KNOWLEDGE TO GO TO COLLEGE
KINDERGARTEN
Every day, ask open-ended rather than yes-no questions. Questions such as “What did you learn in school today?” or “What was your favorite part of the day?” or “What is coming up at school tomorrow?” encourage your child to think carefully about the school day and to speak openly. The resulting conversations can help establish strong family communication and lets your child know that you care about education.

Attend school events and let your child see you communicating with teachers there. This lets the child know that school and family are working together.

Make a goal to give your child sincere positive feedback about her behavior or performance at school daily or weekly. This way, the child feels good about attending school and will look forward to telling you about accomplishments. If you don't know what your child is doing well, call her teacher.

Talk to your child about future educational transitions whenever you have the opportunity; for example, bring up the subject when you drive past the high school or university and when you meet with others who are working on or have completed various steps in their education (family members, friends, doctors, dentists, social workers, etc.).

Read to your child every day, and let him see you reading a newspaper or book for your own education or entertainment as well. This helps develop a strong foundation of reading skills necessary for achievement in all academic subjects.

GRADE 1
Follow recommendations above, plus:

Let your child read to you. Reading the same books many times until the child can do so successfully helps develop confidence.

Ask your child “What do you want to be when you grow up?”

Look for some children’s books at the public library featuring this career and talk to your child about the education required to do that job. You can repeat this activity each year throughout elementary school to track your child's changing interests.

Take special note of any academic weaknesses your child’s teacher may have identified and give your child some extra support in that area. Older siblings, cousins, or other extended family may be able to help and the extra attention will encourage your child.

Research college savings options such as the Coverdell Educational Savings Account (formerly the Educational IRA), the Arizona Family College Savings Plan (529), or regular bank savings accounts and begin to put some money aside, even if it’s a small amount, exclusively for your child’s education. Involve your child in this process if possible. For example, letting your child see you put even a bit of spare change into a special decorated jar each day sends the message that college is a priority and that you are planning ahead. After a while, you can count the money together and deposit it into the savings account of your family’s choice.

GRADE 2
Follow the recommendations for first grade, plus:

Talk to your child about your own college education, or ask other family members to talk to your child about their college experience. If you or your family members have never attended college, talk to your child about another experience that you were the first or only person in your family to face, and relate that to the child's own goal of earning a college education.

Dedicate a space for homework; a desk in the corner of the bedroom or the kitchen table can work equally well as long as the space is quiet and well-lit. Having a daily study routine sends the message that homework is essential and important, just like eating or brushing your teeth.

Help your child organize school supplies in a decorated cardboard box to add some fun to homework time.

Encourage your child to try new things and participate in a fun extra-curricular activity such as a sport, theater, music, student council, scouting, etc. These activities can make going to school more fun; teach teamwork, responsibility and persistence; and develop a child’s talents and self-confidence. Many colleges and scholarship committees may consider a child’s involvement in addition to grades when making merit-based financial awards.

GRADE 3
Continue habits of open communication with your child and the school. Also continue to reinforce good reading and study habits and to seek extra help when needed for weak areas. Plus:

Teach your child to use a weekly or monthly calendar to keep track of school projects, tests, as well as both school and family events. Keep this calendar up-to-date and in a visible place where you and your child can refer to it frequently.

Enforce an after school routine that involves a certain amount of time for play, a certain amount of time for homework and a period for organization of materials for the next day.

Keep informed about your child’s performance on standardized tests required by your school. If your child’s scores are below grade level, discuss how they felt while taking the tests and identify some strategies they can use when they don’t know the answer. If your child is stressed about the test, teach him or her some ways to relax. You can also consult your child’s teacher to get tips on settling anxiety and improving test scores. Working on test-taking confidence and strategies early will help your child feel comfortable when it’s time to take important college entrance exams later.

GRADE 4
Follow the recommendations above, plus:

Give your child more independence in maintaining the homework routine. Praise your child for good time management skills.

Although it’s tempting to intervene whenever your child has a problem, it’s a good idea to help your children learn to solve their own problems and see the impact of their choices. When your child has a problem at school or with friends, ask what your child thinks might solve the problem and discuss how your child might implement a plan to overcome the problem.

Discuss what the outcomes of certain choices might be. If your child learns to take responsibility for overcoming obstacles now, they will be better equipped to meet challenges as they prepare to attend college as well.

Encourage children to call a classmate to discuss an assignment if he or she becomes frustrated.

If your child watches TV, watch together. Look for opportunities to discuss goal setting, choices and consequences, the importance of education, and other values that your family holds.

GRADE 5
Follow the above recommendations plus:

If your child is weak in any of the core subjects, encourage her to make a goal to reach grade level by the end of the year in order to enter middle school without any deficiencies. Work closely with your child and her teacher to achieve this goal.

Encourage sharing with and helping those in need. Together, donate some time to elderly neighbors, help serve food at a shelter, donate unwanted toys or clothes to organizations that help needy families. Your child will see that his or her actions can make a difference to others, and therefore become more confident and motivated.

Help your child identify a role model. This can be an admired family member or a famous person. Together, find out as much as you can about this person’s life (use the library and the internet or interview a person close to you). Discuss with your child why he admires this person, the lessons to be learned from the role model’s life, and similarities between your child and the role model. Try to relate these qualities to your child’s desire to attend college, regardless of whether or not the role model is a college graduate. Have your child write the person a letter to express his admiration.

Get information about the transition to middle school from a variety of sources (family members who are in middle school or high school, teachers, principals, books) to help your child feel prepared for the upcoming changes.

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