Parent Action Plan: 10th Grade

As your child settles into the high school experience, it's a great time for him or her to take on new challenges. It's also not too early to explore colleges, college majors and career goals. Use the list below to help make 10th grade count.

Summer

- Visit a college campus together. It's a great way to get your 10th-grader excited about college. Learn more about how you and your child can prepare for a campus visit.

- Get the facts about what college costs. You may be surprised by how affordable higher education can be. Start by reading Understanding College Costs.

- Help your sophomore explore career ideas. He or she can make a list of interests, talents and favorite activities and start matching them with occupations. Learn how to use exercises like these to make a career worksheet.

- Come up with fun reading ideas. Look for magazines or newspapers your child may like and talk about the books you loved reading when you were in high school. If your family makes reading enjoyable, it can become a daily habit.

Fall

- Make sure your child meets with the school counselor. Your sophomore should schedule a meeting to talk about college and career options and to make sure he or she is taking the most-appropriate classes. Learn more about the high school counselor's role.

- Encourage your child to set goals for the school year. Working toward specific goals helps your high schooler stay motivated and focused.

- Make a plan to check in regularly about schoolwork. If you keep up with your child's tests, papers and homework assignments, you can celebrate successes and head off problems as a team. Get homework tips for your sophomore.

- Talk about extracurricular activities. Getting involved in clubs and other groups is a great way for your child to identify interests and feel more engaged in school. Read more about the benefits of extracurriculars.

- Help your 10th-grader get ready to take preliminary exams. Taking the PSAT/NMSQT or the PLAN this fall can help your child prepare for college admission tests. Sophomores can also use their score reports to figure out which academic areas they need to work on. Learn more about the PSAT/NMSQT.

Winter

- Review PSAT/NMSQT or PLAN results together. Your child's score report indicates his or her academic strengths and weaknesses. Review the report together and talk about ways to improve in areas that need attention. If your child took the PSAT/NMSQT, help him or her log in to My College QuickStart to get personalized feedback based on his or her PSAT/NMSQT score report.

- Start thinking about ways to pay for college. Most families get help paying for college costs. Read 7 Things You Need to Know About Financial Aid to learn more.

- Encourage your sophomore to consider taking SAT Subject Tests. Many colleges require or recommend taking these tests to get a sense of your child's skills in a certain academic area. In general, it's best to take a Subject Test right after taking the relevant course. Learn more about SAT Subject Tests.

- Discuss next year's classes. Make sure your child will be challenging him- or herself and taking the courses college admission officers expect to see. Learn more about the high school classes that colleges look for.

Spring

- Make a college wish list together. Talk with your 10th-grader about qualities he or she may want in a college in terms of location, size, majors offered and so on. Check out How to Find a College That Fits You to learn more about deciding on college must-haves.

- See how much you need to save for college. Use the College Savings Calculator to get an idea of where you are in terms of your savings goal.

- Help your child make summer plans. Summer is a great time to explore interests and learn new skills — and colleges look for students who pursue meaningful summer activities. Find out five ways your high schooler can stay motivated this summer.