



# THE PLAY BOOK

PROMISE  
COACHES  
CAMPAIGN



A City of Pittsburgh Initiative



# *Table of Contents*

Introduction	3
Who's on Your Team?	5
Middle School Students: Starting on the Right Track	7
9th grade - Transitioning to High School	12
Portfolio for Academic and Social Success (PASS)	14
TIME OUT! - Early Warning Indicators	15
10th-12th Grade - Preparing for Post-Secondary Education	17
The Pittsburgh Promise	23
Resources For Out-of-School Youth	25
Non-Traditional Paths to Post-Secondary Education	28
Alternatives to College	29
Post-Secondary Education - Staying In and Getting Out	32
TIME OUT! - Cycling Out of Post-Secondary Education	34
Cycling Towards Post-Secondary Success	35
Additional Resources	36
Promise Coaches Game Plan	38
References	40

## Introduction

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

A high school diploma, and often an advanced education, have become basic job requirements. Therefore, it is not surprising that educational attainment beyond a high school diploma can be crucial to career success. According to the latest federal statistics, high school graduates can expect to earn 38% more than those who don't complete high school. For those who earn associate's or bachelor's degrees, this percent jumps to 65% and 135%, respectively. Over a 40-year career, this translates to a staggering loss in lifetime earnings, ranging from \$370,000 to \$1.3 million dollars.

**Given all of this, how can we keep our youth in the graduation game?**

### **WHAT WE CAN DO!**

Becoming a Promise Coach connects you to the resources that help ensure that the young people in your life are on the road to educational and career success.

Promise Coaches are citizens, like you, who pledge to:

1. Support Pittsburgh's students through high school and beyond by exposing them to educational and career pathways.
2. Promote a community-wide culture of support for high school and post-secondary success.
3. Communicate with young people the importance of educational success to their future and the future of Pittsburgh's communities.
4. Access the wide range of resources that are available so that you are equipped to support the educational success of Pittsburgh's youth.
5. Recruit more adults to support Pittsburgh's young people by becoming Promise Coaches!

### **WHO CAN BE A PROMISE COACH?**

A Promise Coach can be any caring adult who wants to help a young person achieve their educational and career goals.

Coaches can be family members, neighbors, teachers, or other community members. In fact, we expect, and hope, students have multiple adults in their lives who are willing to be involved in their education.

**Thank you for taking the first step to become a Promise Coach!**

## *Essential Skills for Success*

Now that you are taking on the role of a Promise Coach, we would like to highlight some essential skills that students should develop and nurture to ensure academic success. Notice, these skills have very little to do with students' innate intelligence, rather they focus on whether students have the tenacity, or grit, to achieve their goals.

### **ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR SUCCESS**

- **Curiosity** - having an interest in learning
- **Perseverance** - the ability to actively pursue a goal despite set-backs
- **Conscientiousness** - the ability to manage oneself in careful consideration of values and ethics
- **Future Focused** - focused on long-term success and attainment of goals
- **Self-Control** - the ability to avoid temptations that would distract from a higher goal
- **Self-Confidence** - confidence in one's own worth and abilities

### **START WHERE THEY ARE!**

The Promise Coaches Campaign believes the best way to help young people is to start where they are. This Playbook will help you do that by:

- Offering general advice for supporting young Pittsburgh residents.
- Providing sample conversations to have with young people. These will highlight topics to discuss with your student at points along their academic journey.
- Offering activities and opportunities for reflection with your student.
- Identifying additional resources to support effective coaching.

### **FROM THE SIDELINES: IDENTIFYING KEY SKILLS**

- The process of changing our language style, attitude and/or behavior to suit different environments is referred to as code-switching.
- Code-switching is connected to the Essential Skills of conscientiousness and self-control. We can encourage our young people to develop these skills by conducting mock interviews, discussing appropriate dress for different events and helping them build their professional vocabulary.

# Who's On The Team?

## IDENTIFYING KEY PLAYERS

Helping young people grow into successful adults takes more than the effort of parents and schools alone; we all know “it takes a village to raise a child”. Here are a few tips to help your young person develop and maintain his/her team. Key players can include parents, neighbors, educators, members of the community, peers and Promise Coaches like you!

### Getting in Touch

- Encourage students to seek out positive adult figures. This can include talking to school personnel, volunteering at local non-profits, and/or attending community events.
- Young people can also be resources for one another. As Coaches, you can help students identify positive peer groups and social networks that promote, not detract, from their success.

### Staying in Touch

- The hardest, but most important, part of building a network is staying in touch. Coaches can model this behavior by encouraging students to follow-up via email, phone, text and face-to-face meetings.

### Running the Play...

Work with your student to identify three adults or peers that could be added to his/her team. List them here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Ask your student to discuss why he/she selected the people above. List a few of reasons below:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Conversation



Hello, Sam. How's it going?

Things are good, but I still can't find a part-time job.



Have you called my friend at Pittsburgh Allegheny about the job opportunity I mentioned?

Oh, I thought you were gonna call her for me.



I told her a little about you already, but I gave you her information so you could give her a call and begin to build your own relationship.

Mrs. Nancy, isn't Ms. Clark the Vice Principal? Why would someone like that talk to me? I don't feel like I have much to offer.



Sam, you have way more to offer than you give yourself credit for. Think about it, both you and Ms. Clark will benefit. She will get the help she needs and you will get some experience.

I guess I never thought about it that way. All right, I guess I better make that phone call. Thank you.



Of course. Do you think it would help if we practiced what you are going to say when you call? You can always practice the conversation with me.

That would be great! Sometimes I get nervous and I think some practice could really calm my nerves.



Okay, let's meet up in the Student Center this afternoon.

### PLAYBACK

- What did you take away from this conversation?
- What did your student take away?
- How would you address a similar situation?

# *Time Out! Getting in the Middle School Game*

## **STARTING ON THE RIGHT TRACK**

It is never too early to get your student started on a positive academic track. Encourage your middle school student to identify and pursue a few of his/her interests. Urge your student to get involved in after-school activities, sports, dance, art, community service and/or other enriching activities. Here are a few things to monitor as your student goes through middle school:

### **Attendance:**

Be sure your student is attending school 100% of the time. Students who miss as few as 10 days of school can fall behind. Poor attendances is a red flag that your student may be off track.

### **Grades:**

Applaud students when they are doing well and remind them that students with failing grades in math or reading are at high risk of not graduating.

### **Behavior:**

If your student demonstrates behavior misconduct—not paying attention, acting out in class, or not completing assignments— it is a red flag that your student may be getting off track.

### **Running the Play...**

Work with your student to identify a few areas of interest. List two below and begin discussing ways to build on those interests:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Talk to your student about what it takes to be successful in school. Ask them to identify two things they do well and one thing they would like to improve upon:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## **FROM THE SIDELINES: SUMMER ENRICHMENT**

- Summers can be great fun for young people, but the long months off can slow down academic progress. One way to prevent “summer brain drain” is to help your student sign up for summer enrichment opportunities.
- Schools, colleges, community centers and places of worship often offer math, writing, computer, science and other enrichment opportunities over the summer.

## *Time Out! Action Steps for Middle School Students*

### 6TH GRADE

- Help your student determine his/her learning style. For example, does your student learn better by seeing, hearing, or doing? Next, work with your student to develop good study habits based on his/her identified learning style.
- Encourage your student to attend school regularly and get good grades.
- Encourage your student to consistently do his/her homework. Remind your student that homework is practice for test day.
- Discuss any challenges that your student faces and how those challenges prevent him/her from doing well in school. Work with your student to develop solutions and seek out resources to address those issues.

### 7TH GRADE

- Encourage your student to participate in extracurricular activities.
- Remind your student to keep doing assigned homework!
- Talk with your student about career possibilities. If possible, encourage your student to job shadow by following you to work so they can see first-hand what you do in your career.

### 8TH GRADE

- Encourage your student to continue to develop good study habits and organizational skills.
- Remind your student that it is important that he/she does well in ALL subjects, not just his/her favorites. Good performance in middle school will prove valuable in high school.
- Talk to your student about academic plans beyond high school.
- Encourage your student to meet with the high school guidance counselor to discuss ways to prepare for high school.
- Help your student explore academic enrichment programs, including summer and weekend programs, that are available locally.

# *Middle School Students : Selecting a High School*

## **HIGH SCHOOL OPTIONS**

As a Promise Coach, it's important to help your young person find a program that sparks a passion for learning. Because students have a variety of interests, the Pittsburgh Public School District offers a wide range of educational options. Here is some helpful information on the types of schools that you and your student should be aware of when preparing for the high school selection process.

### **CHOICES FOR STUDENTS ENTERING GRADES 9-12**

- **Neighborhood Schools**

Every Pittsburgh Public School District resident is assigned to a school attendance area, commonly referred to as a “feeder area”. The school your student is assigned to is based on the address where the student lives.

- **Whole Magnet School**

Magnet programs allow students to pursue special interests, talents or career goals. The magnet program at whole magnet schools encompass the entire school. These schools do not have a “feeder pattern” and any student within the district is welcome to apply.

- **Partial Magnet School**

Similarly, partial magnet schools allow students to pursue special interests, talents or career goals. These schools encompass a portion of the neighborhood school, and consist of a program within that school.

### **FROM THE SIDELINES: RESOURCES FOR SELECTING A HIGH SCHOOL**

- The Guide to Offerings and Options includes descriptions of high schools within Pittsburgh Public Schools that your middle school student can choose from. This guide can be found at [www.pps.k12.pa.us/magnet](http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/magnet).
- Discover PPS is a tool designed to make finding a high school easier than ever. Whether you are looking for your nearest neighborhood school or you are interested in learning more about magnet programs, Discover PPS can provide you with useful information to help your student make an informed decision. Visit [discoverpps.org](http://discoverpps.org) to learn more.

## *Middle School Students: Selecting a High School*

TYPES	SCHOOLS	ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS <small>*Requirements may vary for each school</small>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neighborhood Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pittsburgh Westinghouse</li> <li>Pittsburgh Carrick</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every student in Pittsburgh Public Schools is assigned a neighborhood school</li> <li>Must reside within feeder pattern of the school</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole Magnet Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pittsburgh Obama</li> <li>Pittsburgh CAPA</li> <li>Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City Residents</li> <li>7th Grade GPA is 2.5</li> <li>PSSA Proficient</li> <li>Complete audition necessary for CAPA</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partial Magnet Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pittsburgh Allderdice</li> <li>Pittsburgh Perry</li> <li>Pittsburgh Milliones/ University Preparatory</li> <li>Pittsburgh Brashear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City Residents</li> <li>7th Grade Grade Point Average (GPA) is 2.5</li> <li>PSSA Proficient</li> </ul>

**NOTE:** City residency is required for all applicants to a Pittsburgh Public School. Non-residents are only admitted if space is available after the lottery is complete and city residents have been placed. If space still exist after the lottery, then staff members in the Pittsburgh Public Schools may submit a tuition waiver or other non-residents may be admitted via tuition payments.

### **Important Magnet Dates/Deadlines:**

Applications Available: Mid-September (of the 8th grade year)

Applications Due: CAPA 6-12: Mid-October

All Other Magnets: Mid-December

For a full listing of exact dates please visit <http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/magnet>

**MAGNET SPACES ARE FILLED THROUGH A LOTTERY.**

## Sample Conversation



Hey, Mr. Williams!



Hey, George! How's it going?



It's okay. I've just been really busy lately.



Really? What have you been up to? How are things at school and at home?



School's been okay, but I had to stop going to my after-school programs.



Why? I thought you liked those programs.



I do like them, but my parents need me to help out at home so I don't have time for them.



That's understandable. Have you talked to them about how much you enjoy these programs and how they can help prepare you for high school and college?



Yeah, I have. They want me to do well in school but they really need me now. I won't have to help as much in the summer though, so I'll finally get a break then.



A break is good, but since you aren't able to go to the after-school programs, have you thought about summer enrichment programs? They can help a lot if you stay involved with academics throughout the year. We can start looking into some summer programs now if you'd like.



I really wanted to just chill with my friends this summer, but I guess it doesn't hurt to look into some opportunities with you.

### PLAYBACK

- What did you take away from this conversation?
- What did your student take away?
- How would you address a similar situation?

# 9th Graders – Transitioning to High School

## LITTLE FISH-BIG POND

Starting high school, and achieving academic success, is an exciting and difficult transition that young people make in their adolescent years. A high percentage of young people who fail to graduate from high school fall off track during 8th and 9th grade. As a Promise Coach, you can help students become high school graduates by offering some tools to navigate their first year of high school.

### Fall Semester

- Students should introduce themselves to their guidance counselor and begin discussing initial college and career interests.
- Students should familiarize themselves with the student handbook for key policies, procedures and expectations at their school.

### Spring Semester

- Advise your student to start taking challenging courses and maintaining a solid GPA.
- Encourage your student to continue strengthening math and writing skills.
- Continue to discuss career interests with your student.

### Running the Play...

Ask your student to provide the name of his/her guidance counselor and two subject teachers. List them below:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Work with your student to identify school enrichment opportunities such as clubs and organizations. List a few below:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## FROM THE SIDELINES: STANDARDIZED TESTING

Students are tested throughout their academic career and need to develop test-taking skills early on to be successful on future tests.

- **Keystones** - these tests are administered following the completion of certain courses. Your student is required to pass these exams in order to graduate.
- **PSAT & SAT or ACT** - these tests are administered to 10th and 11th graders beginning in October. The PSAT can serve as practice for your student while the SAT and ACT are used as college entrance exams for many post-secondary institutions.

# 9th Grade Timeline: Important Dates and Information

SEPTEMBER

- Your student should meet with a guidance counselor at the beginning of freshman year. They can help your student make sense of high school and future academic options.

DECEMBER

- Encourage your student to get involved in extracurricular activities and/or volunteering.
- Have a discussion with your student about his/her transition to high school.

- Achieving good grades throughout high school is important for students because it can increase their GPA. Encourage your student to start out on the right foot by studying hard.

APRIL

- Encourage your student to get good grades and maintain solid attendance.

JUNE

- As summer approaches, work with your student to develop a summer reading list that will enable an easy transition to 10th grade.

## *Portfolio for Academic and Social Success (PASS)*

Ninth grade is the perfect time to begin working with your student to develop a Portfolio for Academic & Social Success or PASS. This portfolio should be a physical binder that helps your student keep track of important documents, contact information and other resources to support him/her on the road to success.

**HERE ARE JUST A FEW ITEMS TO CONSIDER  
INCLUDING IN YOUR STUDENT'S PASS:**

### **ACADEMIC:**

- List of goals
- Action plan to achieve those goals
- Graded school assignments
- Photocopies of awards
- Summer enrichment information
- List of post-secondary institutions to research
- Information from college and career fairs
- Academic essays

### **SOCIAL:**

- Contact information for current or potential mentors
- List of positive peers
- Descriptions of hobbies/interests
- Volunteer/community service information
- Job opportunities
- Resumes
- Letters of recommendation

## *Time Out! - Early Warning Indicators*

**EARLY WARNING INDICATORS** can tip you off to students who are struggling and can predict which students are more likely to drop out of high school. Coaches who know what to look for can intervene and keep their student on track to graduate.

### **RED FLAG**



Attendance is less than 90% (missing 1 or more days every 2 weeks )



Speak with your student about why being in school and showing up on time is important.

Speak with your student about how to get make-up work when he/she is absent.

Feedback on behavior is poor



Speak with your student about his/her behavior and challenges in school.

Speak with your student about the habits and behaviors that lead to success.

Grades point average is below 2.5



Speak with your student about how to get help or tutoring in school.

Speak with your student about homework and study habits.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

## Sample Conversation



Hi, Kara, how was your first week of high school?

Not so great. It definitely was not what I expected.



What do you mean? Did something happen?

Not really, I just thought it would be more like my old school. I knew everybody there and everybody knew me. But here, there are just too many people. I feel invisible!



The 9th grade can be a bit tough. This is only the first week, though. Over time, you will develop friendships and you'll feel just as comfortable there as you did at your old school. Just give it some time.

But what do I do until then? I get so anxious it makes me not want to go to school.



Your feelings are natural. It will take time to feel more comfortable but you can start by taking a few small steps like getting involved with clubs. Have you met your guidance counselor?

No, I feel silly meeting with a guidance counselor.



It might help to get his/her perspective since they know the school. Try to find out who your guidance counselor is and set up some time to meet.

But that's just one person. How is that going to help?



Remember, we are taking it one step at a time. If you feel ready, I can help you check out some of the clubs and organizations at your school. That's a great way to meet new people.

### PLAYBACK

- What did you take away from this conversation?
- What did your student take away?
- How would you address a similar situation?

## 10th Grade - Building the Foundation

### ONE STEP AT A TIME

Tenth grade is a great time to begin taking the necessary steps to prepare for life following high school graduation. The upcoming years are the most important for preparing for the post-secondary education application process, which can include taking standardized tests, maintaining good grades, considering areas of study and reviewing financial aid options. During this process, students will be faced with critical decisions. Now is the time for them to exercise their Essential Skill of being future focused.

#### **Creating a Post-Secondary Education Plan**

- Encourage your student to identify subject interests that could translate into a career. Use career inventory websites to get more information on the level of education needed for careers your student is interested in.
- College fairs are great opportunities for your student to set up tours, ask questions, and speak to admissions personnel. Paying attention to the Promise Coaches newsletter can give you all the dates and times for college fairs in the Pittsburgh area.
- Post-secondary institutions look at a student's entire academic record: grades, essays, SAT and/or ACT scores, extracurricular interests and letters of recommendation. If your student hasn't done so already, encourage him/her to begin creating a PASS, it'll make the application process much easier.

#### **Running the Play...**

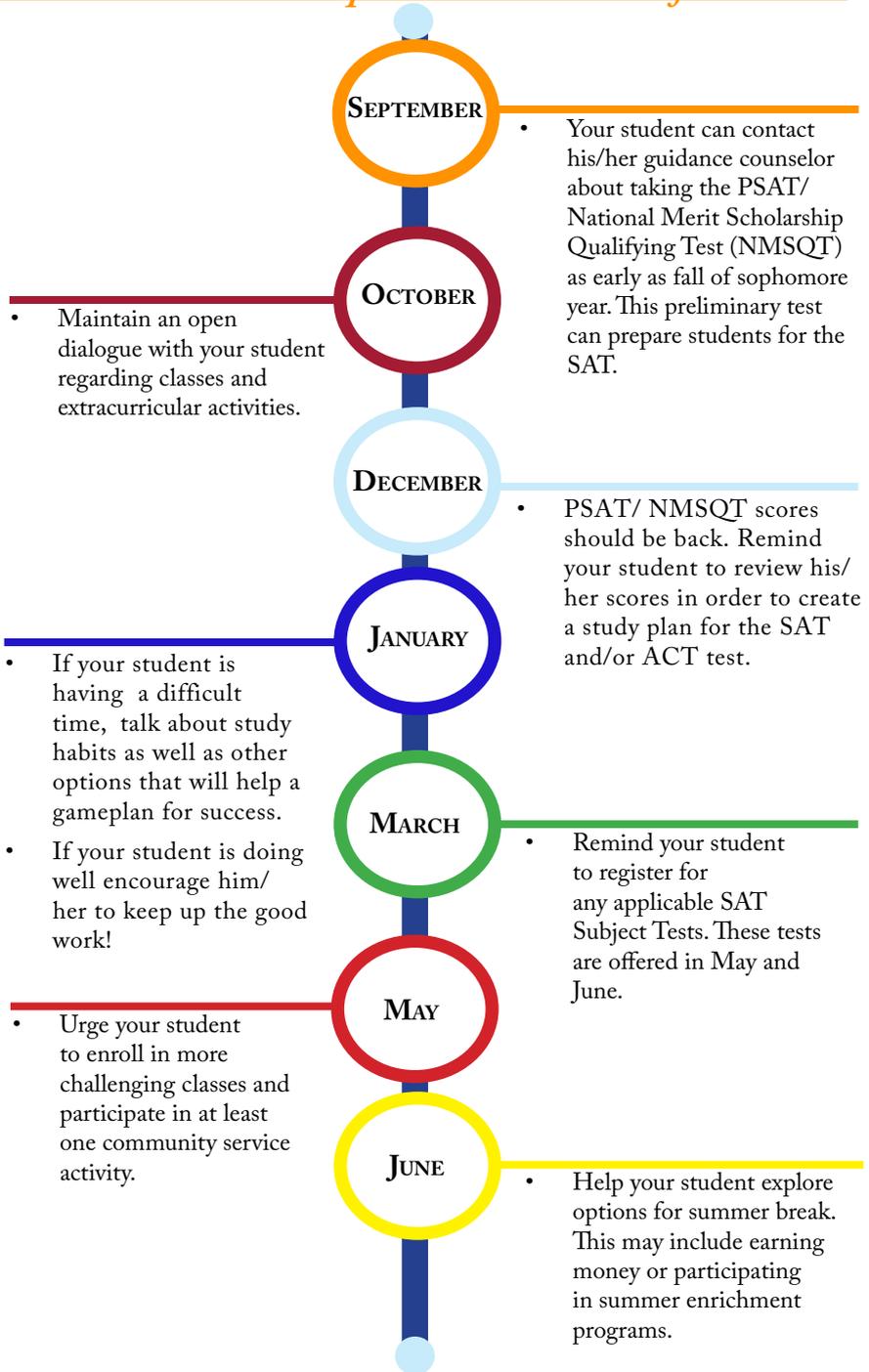
Ask your student to identify a few academic subjects of interest. List three here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Ask your student to list some extracurricular/volunteer activities he/she enjoys. List three here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## 10th Grade Timeline: Important Dates and Information



## 11th Grade: Preparing for the Next Step

### REACHING FOR THEIR DREAMS

By junior year, you should be encouraging students to prepare and register for the PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) for military entrance or the ACT. The PSAT allows your student to practice and can qualify him/her for some scholarships. Study tips for the SAT are available through The College Board.

### Paying for Post-Secondary Education

- What post-secondary education costs and what students can afford are often vastly different. Encourage your student to seek out local as well as national scholarships. The “Resources” tab on the Promise Coaches website has links to scholarship opportunities for your student.
- Many students require loans in order to pay for school. Talk to your student about the importance of borrowing money responsibly.
- Encourage your student to seek out financial aid sources like FAFSA and PHEAA.

### Running the Play...

Ask your student to list a few scholarship opportunities he/she will apply for. List three here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Have your student list the deadlines for those scholarships below:

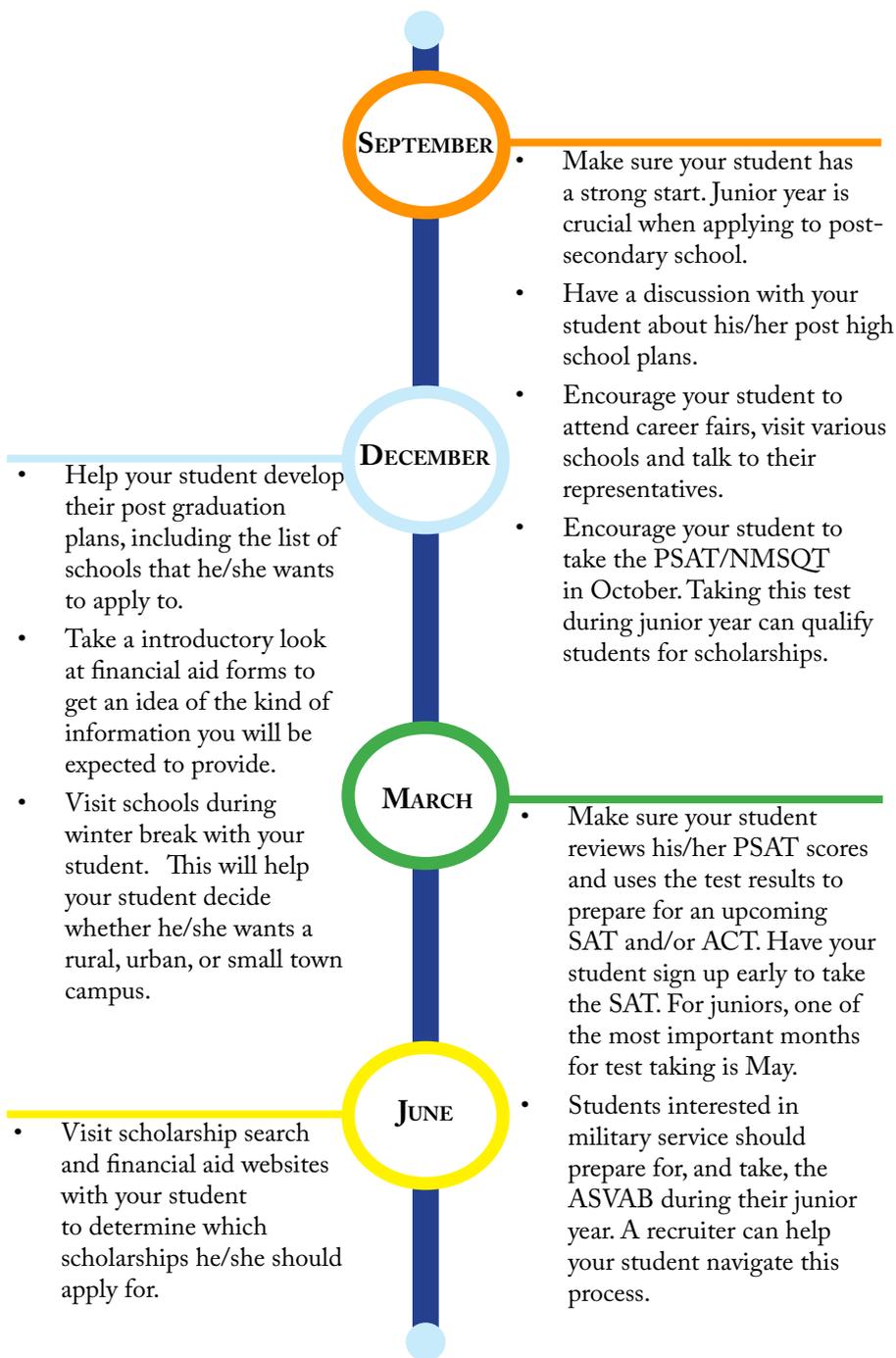
1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### FROM THE SIDELINES: FAFSA (FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID)

The FAFSA is the first step to accessing federal and state grants and federal loans for continuing education.

- To complete the FAFSA, students and their parents need to file their tax returns. The FAFSA form can be filed with information from last year’s tax return, but students **MUST** update their FAFSA form once the current year’s tax return has been completed.
- The FAFSA must be completed every year. Check out the “Resources” section of the Promise Coaches website or the back of this Playbook for more help.

## 11th Grade Timeline: Important Dates and Information



# 12th Grade: Finishing Strong

## THE HOME STRETCH

Your student is rounding the bend towards graduation. While senior year is a time for celebration and reflection, make sure that your student finishes strong. If your student wishes to transition to post-secondary school immediately following graduation, it is important that he/she stays organized and on top of application deadlines. Typically, students will apply to these schools in the fall of their senior year, however, the paperwork and deadlines continue well into the spring.

### Fall Semester

- By this point your student should have an idea of what he/she would like to do following high school graduation.
- Make sure if your student is planning on transitioning to college or other career preparatory institutions, he/she is on track to graduate and has spoken to the guidance counselor about future plans.
- If your student plans to head straight to post-secondary school following graduation, encourage him/her to take the SAT/ACT if it's required for admission.
- Many schools accept students on a rolling basis. This means the earlier your student applies the better his/her chances of acceptance.

### Spring Semester

- Make sure your student stays focused. It's very easy to lose track of goals the closer it gets to graduation.
- Stay on top of deadlines! Spring semester of senior year is filled with forms, applications, and deadlines. Submitting forms in a timely manner can be key to your student's success.

### Running the Play...

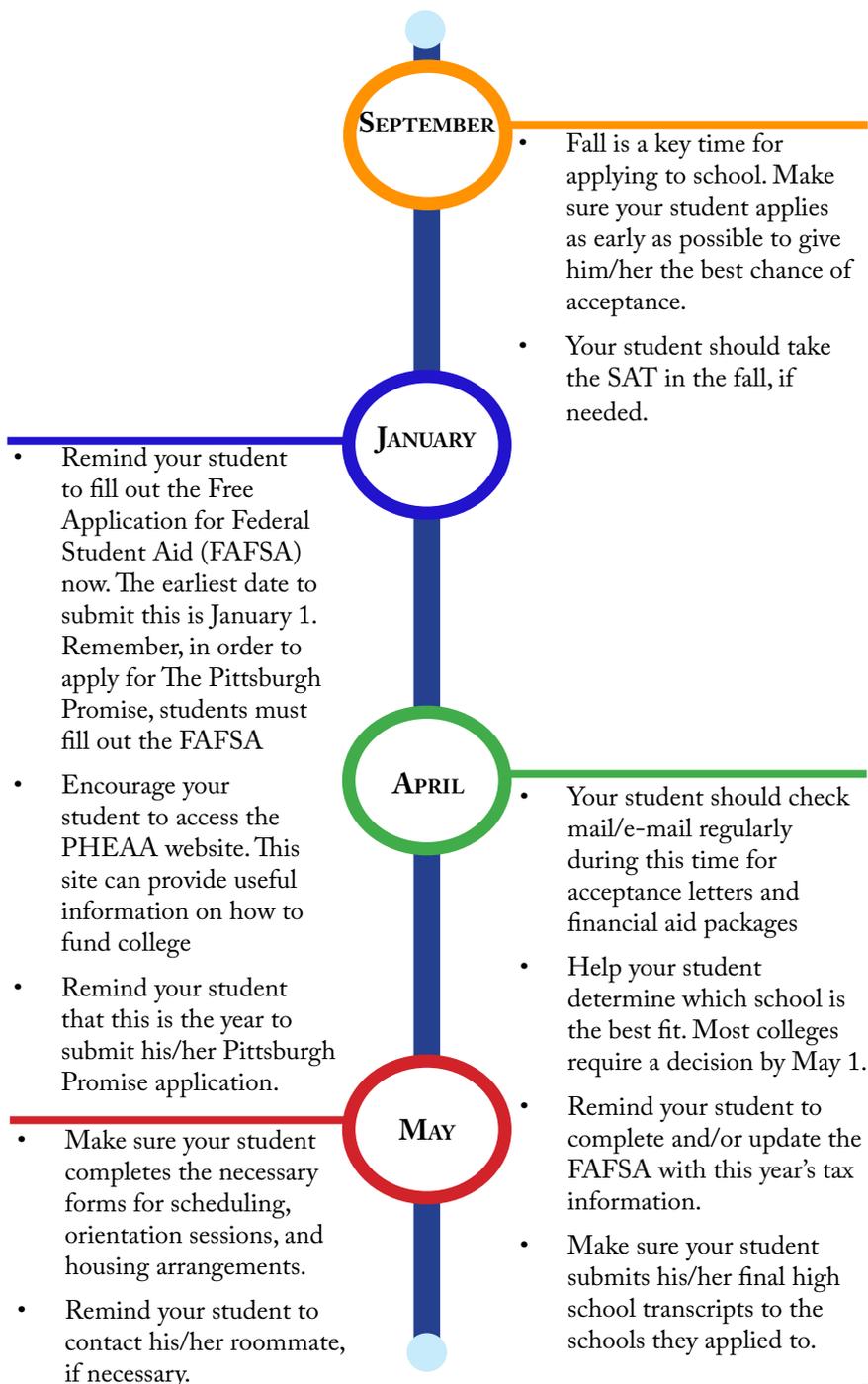
Ask your student to list three preferences he/she has for school (urban/rural, big/small, near/far from home).

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Have your student reflect on his/her favorite memories from high school. List three here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## 12th Grade Timeline: Important Dates and Information



# *The Pittsburgh Promise*

## THE PITTSBURGH PROMISE FACT SHEET

This scholarship is available to qualifying students, and will award up to a maximum of \$40,000 to be used towards post-secondary education. Students have up to five years to use this scholarship money.

### WHAT DO I NEED TO BE ELIGIBLE?

#### Eligibility is based on:

- Residency in the City of Pittsburgh and enrollment in Pittsburgh Public Schools since at least the beginning of 9th grade.
- Cumulative un-weighted high school GPA of 2.5 or higher.
- Cumulative high school attendance rate of at least 90%.
- Completion of the FAFSA each year that a student is enrolled in post-secondary school.

### HOW MUCH AM I ELIGIBLE FOR?

Awards are based on a student's length of continuous residency and enrollment in Pittsburgh Public Schools or one of its charter schools (City High Charter, Urban Pathways Charter, and The Academy Charter):

- Entered PPS in kindergarten: 100% or \$10,000/year
- Entered PPS in 1st-5th grade: 95% or \$9,500/year
- Entered PPS in 6th-8th grade: 85% or \$8,500/year
- Entered PPS at the beginning of 9th grade: 75% or \$7,500/year

### WHAT DOES THE PROMISE PAY FOR?

The Promise Scholarship pays the balance of tuition, fees, books, room & board (at schools providing residency) minus government grants, such as Pell, PHEAA and FSEOG, and other grants and scholarships up to the student's maximum award amount as outlined above, for each of four years of education. The Promise can also be used to offset the cost of Career and Technical Education (CTE) through Pittsburgh Public Schools.

### HOW DO I APPLY

Complete The Pittsburgh Promise application, available on-line at [www.pittsburghpromise.org](http://www.pittsburghpromise.org). Complete the FAFSA application (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) which can be found at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

### HOW DO I CONTACT THE PITTSBURGH PROMISE?

Visit: 1901 Centre Avenue - Suite 204 - Pittsburgh, PA 15219 Call: 412-281-7605  
Website: [www.pittsburghpromise.org](http://www.pittsburghpromise.org) Email: [info@pittsburghpromise.org](mailto:info@pittsburghpromise.org)

# *The Pittsburgh Promise*

## HISTORY

In December 2006, former Superintendent Mark Roosevelt and former Mayor Luke Ravenstahl announced their commitment to provide college scholarships to every graduate of Pittsburgh Public Schools who is also a city resident and who meets certain academic requirements. They commissioned McKinsey and Company to conduct a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy, and to determine the financial model that would be required to sustain it. McKinsey concluded that the strategy was sound and that it would cost \$250 million to sustain it for 30-36 years.

The Promise was launched in December 2007 with a \$100 million commitment by University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). Their commitment included an initial \$10 million to mobilize the scholarship program for the Class of 2008 and an additional \$90 million challenge grant to spur a community-wide campaign to raise \$150 million over 10 years.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In the last five years, The Promise awarded \$49.4 million in Promise scholarships to nearly 5,000 students. The gender and ethnicity of our scholars are as follows:

- 1,160 African American Females (24%)
- 628 African American Males (13%)
- 1,547 Caucasian Females (32%)
- 1,208 Caucasian Males (25%)
- 193 Other Females (4%)
- 97 Other Males (2%)

Since 2007 Pittsburgh Public Schools has moved from having only 39% of their schools meet federal standards to having 70% meet those standards in 2010. While they closed many underperforming and underutilized schools, they also opened four new 6th through 12th grade specialized schools, all of which are showing improvement.

## Out-of-School Youth: Re-entering School

### UNDERSTANDING OPTIONS

If you are coaching a young person who is no longer attending school, remind him/her to get back on track by re-enrolling in an education program today! Here are a few things you may want to discuss with your young person.

#### Why does school matter?

- Emphasize to your young person that getting a high school degree, and eventually a college or technical school degree, increases his/her eligibility for a variety of career opportunities.

#### Balancing life & school

- Help your young person build their Essential Skills for Success, like perseverance and being future-focused, by considering options like moving in with family or working part-time to ensure success as they attempt to re-enroll in school.

#### Running the Play...

Ask your student to list previous reasons for leaving school and discuss realistic ways to avoid these stumbling blocks in the future:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Work with your student to prepare a list of questions to bring to a nearby Re-Engagement Center. List two of those questions below:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

### FROM THE SIDELINES: RESOURCES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

If your young person has been out-of-school for some time, he/she may also want to check out the resources listed on pages 26 & 27.

- Your student may be able to access literacy classes, tutors, testing and instruction with the resources listed.
- Services also include online learning through computers provided through public libraries and community centers.

## *Resources For Out-of-School Youth*

**IN ADDITION TO PROMISE COACHES**, there are a number of community-based organizations that focus their efforts on getting out-of-school youth back on track to degree and career attainment.

### **EMBARK! MENTORING PROGRAM**

Young adults who are aging out of the child welfare system can be connected to caring adult mentors. Mentors provide guidance and help students prepare for post-secondary education and the workforce.

**Website:** [www.alleghenycounty.us](http://www.alleghenycounty.us)

**Call:** 412-350-7153

### **ACTION HOUSING: MYPLACE YOUTH PROGRAM**

Action Housing provides transitional housing to homeless young adults, ages 18-24, in Allegheny County who have aged out of the foster care network. MyPlace promotes independent living and self-sufficiency by working on goals related to employment, education, and life skills as well as creating community connections and life long relationships.

**Website:** [www.actionhousing.org](http://www.actionhousing.org)

**Call:** 412-281-2102

### **YOUTHPLACES: FIRST JOB INITIATIVE**

YP's First Job Initiative is an aggressive effort to provide the much needed first job experience as a stepping stone for career development. This project is committed to providing experiences for young adults who are isolated from career opportunities.

**Visit:** 711 West Commons, 2nd Floor Pittsburgh, PA 15212

**Website:** [www.youthplaces.org](http://www.youthplaces.org)

**Call:** 412-434-0851

### **YMCA OF PITTSBURGH-HOMEWOOD/BRUSHTON:**

#### **LIGHTHOUSE TEEN MEDIA PROJECT**

A comprehensive youth development program, the Lighthouse Teen Media Project integrates media arts and technology with career skill building and academic support. Program takes place at The Westinghouse Academy.

**Website:** [www.ymcaofpittsburgh.org](http://www.ymcaofpittsburgh.org)

**Call:** 412-404-2653

## *Resources For Out-of-School Youth*

### **HILL HOUSE ASSOCIATION:**

#### **OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH PROGRAM**

This program offers GED preparation, job training , academic remediation, life skills and customer service training to 16–21 year old out-of-school youth from Pittsburgh and Braddock. The program prepares teens and young adults for post-secondary education and career training.

**Website:** [www.hillhouse.org](http://www.hillhouse.org)

**Call:** 412-392-4483

### **LIFE'S WORK:**

#### **WIA YOUTH READY PROGRAM**

The Youth Ready Certification is intended to be earned through a gradual process developing youth, either in or out-of-school, into adults prepared for the area workforce. The process requires several work experiences and evaluations. Upon completion of this certification, youth will be equipped to begin successful careers and/or engage in post-secondary education/training.

#### **PROJECT CHOICE**

Project Choice is a self-sufficiency program for juvenile offenders and at-risk youth between the ages of 12 and 21. By working closely together, students learn from each other and produce lasting friendships, support systems and develop improved self-esteem. Project Choice also helps students identify and address issues that have prevented them from making the right choices in the past.

**Website:** [www.lifesworkpa.org/youth-service](http://www.lifesworkpa.org/youth-service)

**Call:** 412-471-2600

### **BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF WESTERN PA:**

#### **FRESH START**

By helping to address the needs of juvenile offenders ages 10-18 county-wide, this program supports the development of skills that help youth make positive choices to avoid further involvement in the justice system, pay restitution for the damage they caused and engage in meaningful community service or employment opportunities.

**Website:** [www.bgcwpa.org](http://www.bgcwpa.org)

**Call:** 412-782-5710

## *Non-Traditional Paths to Post-Secondary Education*

### LEARNING FROM THE PAST, BUT MOVING FORWARD

If your young person has fallen off track, there are ways to assist him/her to get back on the right path to academic success. Remember, it is never too late to begin post-secondary education, even if students are starting from non-traditional academic backgrounds.

#### **Is additional schooling a realistic option?**

- More and more students are following non-traditional paths to post-secondary education. Your young person needs to know this and be encouraged to continue to pursue higher education.
- Allow your student time to reflect on past attitudes and behaviors in school, as well as current attitudes towards his/her education. Negative ongoing life circumstances can slow the achievement of educational goals.

#### **Running the Play...**

Ask your student to list below a few of the circumstances that led to his/her enrollment in an alternative school or GED program:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Using resources available through the Promise Coaches Campaign, prepare a joint checklist for addressing those circumstances to move forward:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **FROM THE SIDELINES: GED (GENERAL EDUCATION DIPLOMA) CERTIFICATE**

- A GED is an alternative to a high school diploma for students who have not graduated from high school. Students need to pass tests in five subject areas: language arts writing, language arts reading, social studies, science, and math.
- Tests cannot be taken online so review the “Resources” page on the Promise Coaches website for more info on how to register.

## Alternatives to College

### FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Every student has different talents that can best be expressed through a variety of different educational options. On the next two pages you will find alternatives to four year colleges that your student may want to explore.

#### TECHNICAL/VOCATIONAL TRAINING

This can be an excellent alternative for students who look forward to entering the workforce quickly. These programs give students the necessary skills they need to excel in a career field.

Resources for students considering technical school include:

- Bidwell Training Center
- ITT Technical Institute
- Pittsburgh Technical Institute
- Carnegie Library's Database of Vocational and Technical Schools
- Job Corps

#### MILITARY SERVICE

Military service can give students an amazing opportunity to see the world, be of service, and receive the training they need for civilian careers. Students can join the military as early as 17 with parental consent. They will need at least a GED to enlist, another reason for your student to stay on track for graduation.

Students thinking about joining the military should consider:

- **Looking into Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC):** Each branch of the military has their own ROTC program. This opportunity is open to students enrolled full time in a college or university who have an interest in serving as a military officer. ROTC provides full scholarships for students to complete their bachelors degree.
- **Going to talk to your local recruiter:** Recruiters can answer a lot of your questions such as how to sign up, when to take the ASVAB, and which branch is best for you.

## *Alternatives to College*

### SERVICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Many service learning opportunities are open to high school graduates. Additionally, many of these opportunities last for one year, which is ideal for students who want to travel, meet new people, and learn new skills before settling on a career. While not all positions are paid, most provide a living stipend and some provide money that can be put towards a post-secondary education. Spending time in a service learning position can put your student ahead when it comes to applying for jobs, however these opportunities can be challenging though, so make sure your student makes an educated decision.

Some examples of service learning opportunities include:

- AmeriCorps
- The Peace Corps
- Public Allies

### CAREER TRAINING AND INTERNSHIPS

Although it is becoming more commonplace that job applicants have some form of higher education, students can and do jump straight from high school to a career. While this transition may be difficult, there are resources to help students find career training, internships, and entry level jobs.

Some resources that may make this transition easier include:

- The Urban League of Greater Allegheny County
- Youth Works
- The Bloomfield Garfield Corporation's Youth Employment Program
- Career Link
- Job Corps

## Sample Conversation



Hey, Sarah!



Hi, Carmen, how are you doing? How are your education plans coming?



I don't see the point. You know I don't have a normal track record. Schools are gonna see that and they won't even give me a chance.



Carmen, that's not true. Post-secondary schools are constantly looking to add to their diversity. They would love an applicant like you who has shown the tenacity to overcome obstacles.



What do you mean?



Many schools require personal essays as part of their application process, so you should be honest about your previous struggles in school. You can show them how you have grown from those experiences and how you will use those lessons to be successful in college.



So, you don't think that will hurt my chances?



A lot of applicants have hiccups on their application. It's how you learned from those experiences that matters most. Let's see how we can make your essay and application really show you at your best. Would you like help organizing your materials to get started?



Thank you. I thought this would never happen for me, but knowing that I can tell my story helps. It has really been rough for me, but I don't want to give up on my dreams.

### PLAYBACK

- What did you take away from this conversation?
- What did your student take away?
- How would you address a similar situation?

# Post-Secondary Education- Staying In and Getting Out

## **TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL**

Your student has finally made it to post-secondary school! Congratulations! While this is a great accomplishment, the next big challenge is staying in and graduating. One of the best ways to ensure a timely graduation is knowing how to navigate the institution. Encourage your student to be proactive and start reaching out to key people on campus with the ability to help him/her make sense of it all.

### **Faculty Members**

- Professors and instructors hold the key to a young person's academic future, so encourage him/her to build a connection to at least one instructor per semester.

### **Academic & Social Support**

- Academic advisors, math and writing tutors, financial aid counselors, and resident advisors (RAs) are all able to provide different types of support. Your student should also build a connection with these individuals.

### **Peers & Family**

- Your student may struggle to balance his/her home and school lives. Try to help by acknowledging these concerns and identifying realistic ways to deal with them.

### **Running the Play...**

Ask your student to provide the name & email address of one academic advisor, one instructor and a financial aid counselor at their school:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Find out what student organizations your student is involved in (or plans to be involved in) while in school. Ask them to list a couple:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

## **FROM THE SIDELINES: LESSONS FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS**

Here are some tips for success that you may want to share with your student:

- Take ownership of your education and personal life by being proactive!
- Set short and long-term goals and do not be afraid to modify them.
- Get real-life experience through internships, volunteering or part-time work.
- Build a personal brand by learning about yourself and developing unique qualities that can help you stand out!

## Sample Conversation



Hi, Mr. Thomas.



Oh, hi Justin. Are you back from school already? How's it been going so far?



I'm only home for the weekend, but so far it's been difficult. I just can't seem to get the same grades I used to get in high school, and I don't know why.



How many hours are you studying per night for each of your classes?



I'm not sure. The same as before, I guess.



That might've been enough to get you by in high school but this is a whole different ball game. You've got to put in about 2-3 hours of studying per week for every credit hour you're taking to stay on top of things. Have you spoken to your instructors or looked into tutoring?



No, that stuff is for people who aren't smart enough. I don't want people to think I can't handle myself. I came here on my own, I can make it on my own.



That is what many new students think, but the reality is, most students need help during their post-secondary education career. I bet you would be surprised, the smartest kids in class are probably using the writing, math or science centers the most.



Hmm, I thought everybody just got it but me. I've never thought about how much time they were putting in. Maybe we can talk more about that. Could you help me find ways to study? I'm sure I could use some help there too.

### PLAYBACK

- What did you take away from this conversation?
- What did your student take away?
- How would you address a similar situation?

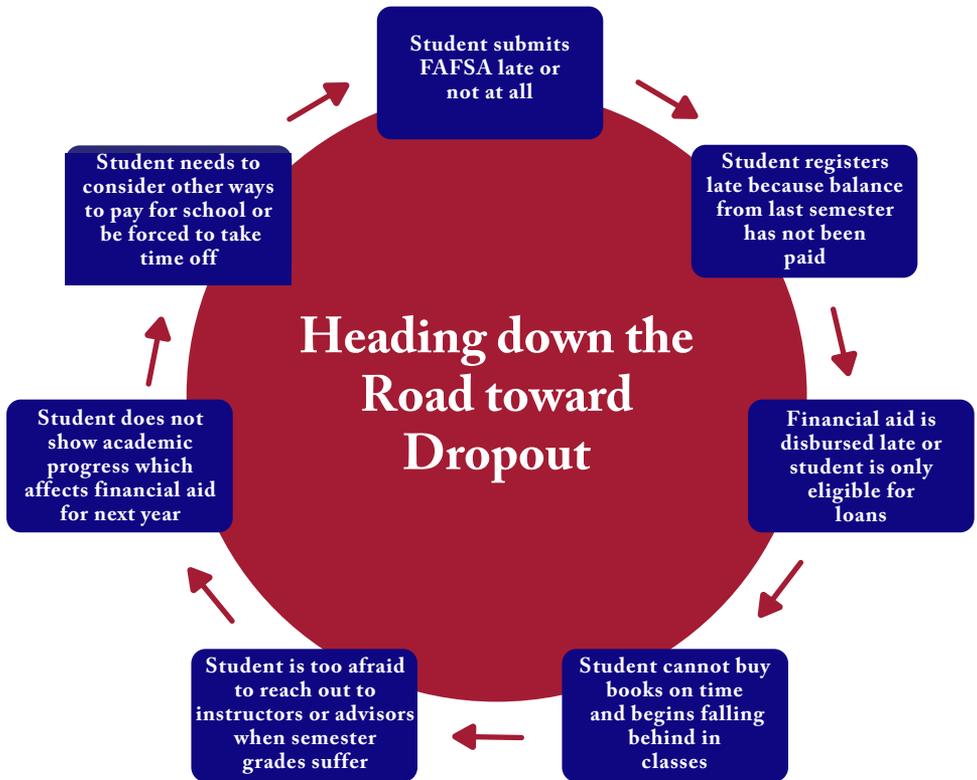
# *Time Out! - Cycling Out of Post-Secondary Education*

## IDENTIFYING ISSUES EARLY

With all of the temptations and freedom during post-secondary education it is easy to see how students can fall off-track. Three factors that have the biggest impact on dropout rates are:

1. **Financial concerns**
2. **Poor academic performance**
3. **Lack of connection with the campus**

As a Promise Coach, you can help your student avoid this negative cycle by discussing issues before they happen and encouraging him/her to access resources to get back on track.

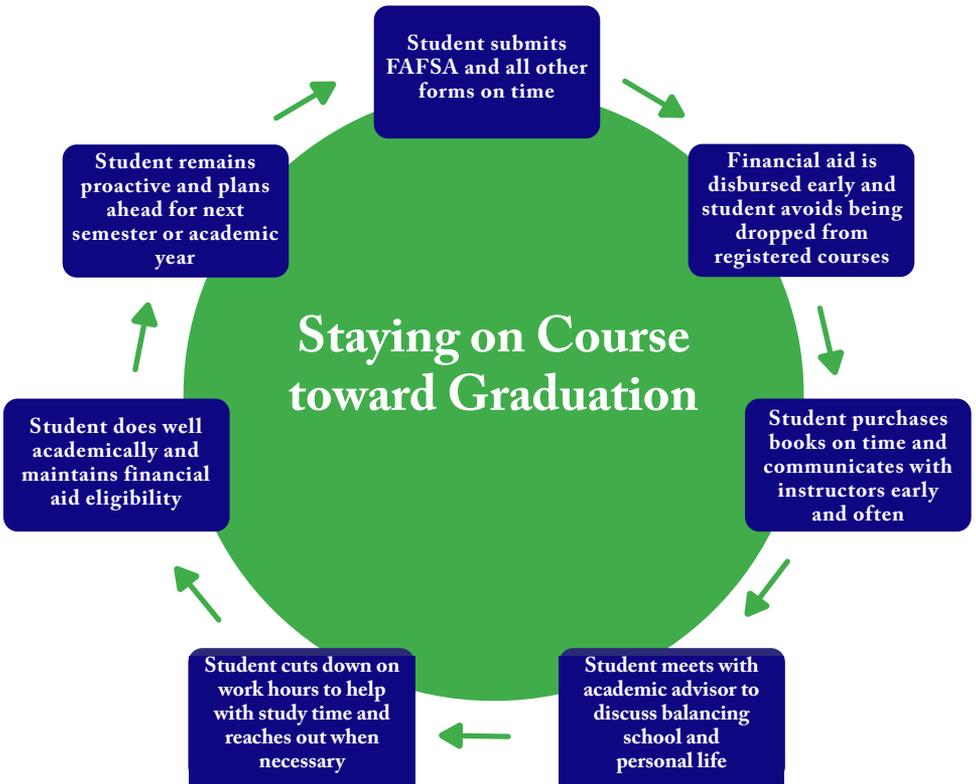


# Cycling Towards Post-Secondary Success

## BEING PROACTIVE

Many of the issues identified in the previous diagram began with small problems that spiraled out of control. As a Promise Coach, you can help your student stay on track by encouraging responsible help-seeking behavior. This includes:

1. Taking financial aid deadlines seriously
2. Working with instructors and tutors to improve academic performance
3. Maintaining a connection to academic advisors, counselors, and other campus resources



## ***Additional Resources***

**Listed below are a few resources to help you support your student:**

### **SCHOOL TO CAREER (S2C)**

S2C focuses on job development and career exploration, while teaching students the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful.

**Website: [www.s2c.opdc.org](http://www.s2c.opdc.org)**

### **ACCELERATED HIGH SCHOOL**

University of Pittsburgh has a dual enrollment program that allows high school students to receive college credits.

**Website: [www.asundergrad.pitt.edu/chs.accelerated-high-school](http://www.asundergrad.pitt.edu/chs.accelerated-high-school)**

### **THE COLLEGE BOARD**

The College Board develops and administers standardized tests used by post-secondary education institutions as part of the college admissions process.

**Website: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)**

### **FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA)**

The first stop for federal financial aid.

**Website: [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)**

### **FAST WEB**

Free online scholarship and college search service.

**Website: [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)**

### **SALLIE MAE**

A leading provider of student loans and banking for students, graduates, and their families.

**Website: [www.salliemae.com](http://www.salliemae.com)**

### **SAT**

A standardized test for college admission in the United States.

**Website: [sat.collegeboard.org](http://sat.collegeboard.org)**

### **ACT**

A college readiness standardized test for high school achievement and college acceptance.

**Website: [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)**

## *Additional Resources*

### **EDUCATION PLANNER**

Career assessments, scholarship information, and other planning tools to get ready for college.

**Website: [www.educationplanner.org](http://www.educationplanner.org)**

### **YOU CAN GO!**

Success stories and resources for high school students preparing for college.

**Website: [youcango.collegeboard.org](http://youcango.collegeboard.org)**

### **BIG FUTURE**

Additional resources on being college-ready, selecting a career, paying for school, and more.

**Website: [bigfuture.collegeboard.org](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org)**

### **COLLEGE RESULTS ONLINE**

Compare many factors at several schools to find the one that's right for you.

**Website: [www.collegeresults.org](http://www.collegeresults.org)**

### **CAMPUS TOURS**

Take a virtual tour of colleges you're interested in.

**Website: [www.campustours.com](http://www.campustours.com)**

### **PENNSYLVANIA HIGHER EDUCATION ASSISTANCE AGENCY (PHEAA)**

Information to help students with college preparations, including assistance with FAFSA and the financial aid process.

**Website: [www.pheaa.org](http://www.pheaa.org)**

### **NEED**

Programs include Adopt-a-Student, Access to College and Career Education Program, Workforce Diversity Internship Program, African American Male Mentoring Initiative, and more.

**Website: [www.needld.org](http://www.needld.org)**

### **THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEARNING ALLIANCE**

Free after school tutoring and enrichment to students in Pittsburgh Public Schools, grades K-12. Several program sites available throughout the City of Pittsburgh.

**Website: [www.neighborhoodlearning.org](http://www.neighborhoodlearning.org)**

## *Promise Coaches Game Plan*

Now that we've provided a few tools to help you work with your young person, we want to remind you of some of the action steps you can take to ensure an ongoing and effective coaching relationship:

- Familiarize yourself with your student's Essential Skills for Success
- Find out how your student can track progress (e.g. grades, attendance etc.) and begin reviewing the contents together.
- Work with your student to develop a "Portfolio for Academic and Social Success" (PASS).
- Use the "Running the Play" and "Sample Conversation" sections in this Playbook to build up the PASS.
- Co-create a few milestones to celebrate your student's progress.
- Keep building your Playbook by accessing updated resources through the Promise Coach Campaign website, newsletters and ongoing networking events.
- Share your views on ways to improve the Campaign for future coaches and students!

**Feel free to include action steps of your own:**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## *Promise Coaches Game Plan*

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## References:

The Promise Coaches Campaign was informed by materials from The Philadelphia Graduation Coach Campaign, an initiative of Mayor Michael A. Nutter's Office of Education.



## *Our Mission*

The Promise Coaches Campaign aims to equip and empower adults in the City of Pittsburgh to help all youth earn a high school diploma and succeed in higher education and careers.

## *Our Vision*

All Pittsburgh youth will have at least one supportive, knowledgeable adult who can coach them to achieve their academic and career goals.



Contact us:

412-255-2280

[www.promisecoaches.org](http://www.promisecoaches.org)

[servepgh@pittsburghpa.gov](mailto:servepgh@pittsburghpa.gov)

