

Comparing Postsecondary Education Options

The **BIG** Idea

- What are my postsecondary education options?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up (5 minutes)
- II. Compare Postsecondary Options (20 minutes)
- III. Match Up! (15 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

PORTFOLIO PAGES:

- Portfolio pages 13 and 14, Comparing Postsecondary Options

STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook pages 111-112, Student Profiles
- Student Handbook page 113, Postsecondary Pros & Cons
- Student Handbook pages 114-115, Education After High School Glossary

FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW, Education After High School 1: Comparing Postsecondary Education Options

- Overhead projector (optional)

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- List one pro and one con for each of the following postsecondary options: community college, tech/trade school, four-year college.

OVERVIEW

In this first lesson of a seven-lesson unit, students learn about postsecondary education options. The lesson opens with students sharing what they already know. Next, the Facilitator fills in gaps in students' knowledge by describing three educational options: community college, tech/trade school, and 4-year college or university as students take notes. Then, students apply what they've learned by matching student profiles to postsecondary options based on needs, interests, career goals, etc. Lastly, students wrap up by listing a pro and con for each postsecondary option.

PREPARATION

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Write the day's vocabulary and definitions on the board.
- Prepare a list of two local examples for each of the following postsecondary options: 4-year, 2-year (community college), and tech/trade schools. Make sure to highlight these examples when you review each type of education during **Activity II, Compare Postsecondary Options**.
- In **Activity II, Compare Postsecondary Options**, if modeling how to take notes, prepare a transparency of **Portfolio pages 13 and 14, Comparing Postsecondary Options**.
- If working in pairs for **Activity III, Match Up!**, determine who will work together.
- Following lesson 5 of this unit, students will go on a college visit. Refer to the checklist below on how to plan a college visit. Talk to your administration to plan the logistics and budget for your trip.

COLLEGE VISIT CHECKLIST

- Contact local colleges to schedule the college visit.
- Contact your school principal to approve college choice and select specified date.
- In some school districts you may need to write a letter to the Board explaining the trip and why it's important. Ask your school administration if this is the case.
- Distribute permission slips (if not already done).
- Give the students an adequate amount of time to return the permission slips before the college visit.

- Discuss transportation expenses with your administrator. Plan, book, and pay for the transportation to and from the college.
- Ask your school about its chaperone policy. Secure any additional chaperones needed.
- Investigate options for lunch for students (check with the school to find out what types of payments are accepted for lunch or if lunch will be provided for the students)
- Establish a procedure for bringing and filling out **Portfolio pages 18-21, College Visit Planner** (Lesson 5).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Postsecondary education has become a necessity in today's workforce. According to America's Career Resource Network, 48 out of 50 of the fastest-growing jobs in the United States require some sort of education after high school.* While many students (and parents) perceive traditional 4-year colleges as the only legitimate form of higher education, there are many other acceptable and accessible forms of postsecondary education, including community college and tech/trade schools. These options are becoming critical providers of job training, both for degree-seekers and for students whose goals are to refine and broaden their skills. For some students, these other options may in fact be a better match for reasons ranging from career goals to economics. It is also important to recognize that higher education is a two-way street: schools need to make a decision about whether a student is a good match, but a student also needs to decide whether the school is a good match – they need to “accept” each other.

* SOURCE: <http://cte.ed.gov/acrn/parents/afterHS.htm>

VOCABULARY

Associate's Degree: a two-year degree, usually earned at a community college.

Baccalaureate Degree: a four-year degree from a college or university. Also referred to as a bachelor's degree.

Community College: two-year colleges that offer a degree after the completion of two years of full-time study.

Postsecondary Education: any education that occurs after the completion of a high school diploma or general education development tests (GED).

Career & Technical School: a school that provides training in occupational or vocational areas. Many offer technical programs that prepare students for immediate entry into the job market.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

DO NOW:

*(You may choose to present the Warm Up activity as a written Do Now. Present the questions on the board or overhead, and have students write only their answers on index cards. You could also choose to give the students a handout by copying **Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW.**)*

Questions:

1. Prediction: What fraction or percentage of today's fastest-growing jobs require education after high school? Explain why you chose this percentage. (For example, 2 out of 5, or 40%)
2. In a few sentences, explain what you currently plan to do after you graduate from high school.

[After they have completed their answers call on students to read their responses. Then begin with the Warm Up as written.]

For **Activity I, Warm Up**, to review the vocabulary for this unit in an engaging way, you may want to play a game with the Education After High School glossary. Read each definition aloud and instruct students to raise their hands if they can correctly identify the matching vocabulary word. The first student to correctly identify the word could receive a prize.

If you want to make **Activity II, Compare Postsecondary Options** more student-centered, ask the students the bolded questions to see what they already know about the topic.

For **Activity II, Compare Postsecondary Options**, if you think your students will struggle to engage with the material in a lecture format, you may also want to have students jigsaw the reading in small groups. Copy the notes for each type of education listed in the facilitator guide of this lesson. Assign students to groups of 3 or 4. Each group should be given information about

one type of education. (This means that multiple groups will be reading about the same postsecondary option.) Students should read their information and use it to complete their section of **Portfolio pages 13 and 14, Comparing Postsecondary Options**. Then have each group share one or two facts they learned about their postsecondary option. Use this information to fill in the notes for **Portfolio pages 13 and 14, Comparing Postsecondary Options** on the overhead projector.

For **Portfolio pages 13 and 14, Comparing Postsecondary Options**, you may choose to write notes after you discuss each type of education, instead of writing notes while delivering the content. You can call on students to help fill in the blanks.

For **Activity III: Match-Up!**, if working in pairs or small groups is not manageable in your classroom, have students work individually.

To make **Activity III: Match-Up!**, more engaging you may want to create your own Student Profile Card that describes you in high school. You can display this on an overhead projector or chart paper and model for students why you chose the postsecondary option you pursued.

For the **Wrap Up**, identifying “cons” requires a deeper level of thinking, going beyond direct recall. Most students should be able to identify at least one disadvantage of each postsecondary option. However, if this is too much of a challenge, have your students list two pros for each option. To assist struggling students, you may also choose to have the students work in pairs to list the pros and cons.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** What do you want to do when you graduate high school? [Students respond.]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** What percentage of today's fastest-growing jobs do you think require education beyond high school? [Students respond.]

96% of today's fastest-growing jobs require education after high school, or **post-secondary education**. However, this does not necessarily mean you need to go to a traditional 4-year school, which is what most people think of when they hear the word "college." There are lots of different kinds of colleges. Depending on what kind of a career you are considering, the kind of school you need varies. In other words, not all jobs require the same type or amount of education.

There are schools that train you in specific jobs, like computer programming, auto repair, nursing, etc. There are others that bridge your education between high school and a traditional 4-year college or university. And, there are colleges that encourage you to explore a variety of subject areas before focusing on one. These schools prepare you for all kinds of careers, from engineering to teaching.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** What do you already know about postsecondary education? What kinds of schools can you attend after high school? [Give students a couple of minutes to respond.]

[As students respond, jot their ideas on chart paper. If you'd like, list students' initials next to their responses to give them credit. If no one mentions the following three post-secondary options, add them to the list on the chart paper:

- Community college (2-year college)
- Career & technical school
- 4-year college]

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Great job! As you can see, there are a lot of choices for what to do after you graduate from high school. There are so many choices because students have different needs, interests, and career goals. Just because one type of school is a good match for one person, doesn't mean it will be the right match for someone else.

In today's lesson, you will learn about three postsecondary education choices: community college, tech/trade schools, and 4-year college. Each offers a different kind of education.

II. Compare Postsecondary Options (20 minutes)

1. [In this activity, explain each of the three types of postsecondary options as students take notes on **Portfolio pages 13 and 14, Comparing Postsecondary Options**. The information about each option is presented in question-and-answer format. Pause after each question and answer to allow students time to fill in the handbook page. You may want to help students keep track of the important points of the lecture by using the overhead projector to model how to complete **Comparing Postsecondary Options**. (See **Implementation Options** for suggestions.)]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's compare each of the three major types of postsecondary options: community college, tech/trade school, and 4-year college/university. The more you know, the better prepared you will be to find the perfect match for your needs, interests, and career goals.

[Refer students to **Portfolio pages 13 and 14, Comparing Postsecondary Options**. Explain that you will discuss each of the three types of postsecondary education options as they take notes. Speak slowly and clearly, pausing to allow all students a chance to take complete notes by filling in the blanks on the page.]

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's start with community college. Here are some facts – some of which you probably know and others that will surprise you. Get your pencils ready...

What is a community college?

- Community colleges are run by your city or county.
- Offer an **associate's degree** after the completion of two years of full-time study.
- Community college has two main purposes:
 - To train students for immediate entry into the job market. Examples include: bookkeeper, fashion designer, computer programmer, and paramedic.
 - To prepare students to transfer to a 4-year college or university.

Who goes to a community college?

- More than half the nation's undergraduates.*
- Governors, surgeons, actors, corporate executives, and even astronauts started their postsecondary education at community college. Some have won Pulitzer and Nobel prizes!
- A few famous community college grads:
 - Walt Disney
 - H. Ross Perot (corporate executive, 1992 presidential candidate)
 - Eileen Collins (NASA astronaut)
 - Clint Eastwood, Tom Hanks, Annette Bening (actors, directors)
 - Alvin "Pete" Rozelle (NFL Commissioner)
 - Natalie Merchant (solo artist)

*SOURCE: American Association of Community Colleges: <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/history/Pages/pasttopresent.aspx>

Why go to a community college?

- Transfer to 4-year college – Some students start their education at community college, then transfer to a 4-year college.
- Lower cost – Costs average less than half of those at public four-year colleges** and about one-tenth those at private four-year colleges.
- Location – Can live at home, saving money on campus-living costs.
- Small class size – Small class sizes and personal attention from professors or instructors.
- Professors focus on teaching – Professors' main job is teaching, not research and publishing. Most have lots of practical experience in the subjects they teach.
- Flexible class schedules – Classes offered during the day, evening, and weekends to meet the needs of students' other commitments, such as jobs and families.

**SOURCE: American Association of Community Colleges: <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfacts.aspx>

Community college admits any high school graduate, so why do I need to work hard in high school?

- Community college is college. While it may be open to all, you need to have certain skills and knowledge to succeed there, and to ultimately graduate. The best way to prepare for this is to practice by working hard while you're still in high school.
- Almost 50 percent of students who enter community college end up dropping out in

the first year. Those who graduate are generally the ones who worked hard in high school.

4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now let's focus on career and technical schools.

What are tech and trade schools?

- Provide courses that allow you to start a career in a specific field that you enjoy without having to take classes that really don't interest you.
- Offer a variety of options, including 2-year **associate degree** programs and 1-2 year programs from which you earn a license or certificate in a specific skill.
- Offer licenses or certificates in "skilled" careers, such as
 - auto mechanic
 - child care worker
 - computer technician
 - hairstylist
 - medical assistant
 - truck driver
 - interior decorator
 - mechanical engineer
 - paralegal
 - registered nurse

Why go to a tech/trade school?

- Nearly one-third of the fastest growing occupations require an **associate's degree** or a postsecondary vocational certificate.*
- Focuses on students' and employers' needs.
- Trains students in skills required for a specific type of job.
- Small classes and more individual attention than 4-year colleges.
- Night and weekend courses for those who work full-time.

*[Source of statistic: 2004 U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics report The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), www.acteonline.org]

5. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Finally, let's take a look at traditional 4-year colleges or universities.

What is a 4-year college or university?

- Provides a general, well-rounded education.
- Offers a **bachelor's degree** in a specific area of study, called a major.
- Common fields of study include biology, business, economics, English literature, foreign languages, political science, and history.
- Lays the groundwork for more advanced studies and professional work (for example: you need to go to a 4-year college or university before going to medical school or law school).

Who goes to a 4-year college or university?

- Students who want a general academic program and the opportunity to explore many different interests.
- Students preparing for “professional” careers. Examples: lawyers, doctors, teachers, architects, accountants, etc.
- Students who want to pursue graduate work or education after college.

Why go to a 4-year college or university?

- Broader knowledge – learn skills useful both in work and in life, such as:
 - thinking abstractly and creatively
 - expressing yourself clearly in speech and writing
 - making wise decisions
- More money – most high-paying jobs require a **bachelor's degree**.
- More job opportunities.
- More choice – offers a wide variety of courses in the social sciences, humanities, and sciences.
- Independence – in many cases, you live away from home, on your own in a dorm.

III. Match Up! (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Who remembers what percent of jobs require postsecondary education? [Let students answer. If no one answers correctly, remind them that 96% of the fastest-growing jobs today require some sort of education after high school.]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** In this activity, you will read about different students who are about to graduate high school. Working with a partner, you will figure out which of the three postsecondary education options we've discussed today is the best choice for each student. You may use your notes from **Portfolio pages 13 and 14, Comparing Postsecondary Options** to help you. Then, we will meet as a class again to share and discuss your decisions. Be ready to defend your choices!

2. [Divide the class into pairs. Refer students to **Student Handbook pages 111-112, Student Profiles**. Tell them they have 5 minutes to review the profiles. Instruct them to check one of the three postsecondary options that they think is the “best fit” for each student. Remind them that they should be prepared to defend their decision in a follow-up class discussion.]
3. [After 5 minutes, have students come together for a whole-class discussion. Have volunteers read aloud each profile, then ask pairs to share which postsecondary choice they made and why. If a decision is unanimous, select a pair or two to justify the choice. If a decision is not unanimous, have pairs who made different choices support their decision to the class.]
4. [If the students finish this activity early, instruct them to create their own profile. If time permits, have a few students share which postsecondary option they feel is the best fit for them and why.]

IV. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. [Refer students to **Student Handbook page 113, Postsecondary Pros & Cons**.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Now it's your turn to show what you know. Complete this handout by listing at least one benefit, or pro, for each type of postsecondary education option and one disadvantage, or con.

2. [Upon completing the handout, ask for volunteers to share one pro and one con for each type of postsecondary option. Make students understand that pros and cons can be very subjective. For example, one student may find that ability to live at home while going to community college to be a pro, while another student may see this as a negative aspect of going to community college.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Whether you decide to go to a four-year college, community college, or tech/trade school, you will gain knowledge and build skills that will help you to succeed in your career, and in your life outside of work. But, whatever choice you make, it's important that you work hard now while you're still in high school.

DO NOW
Education After High School 1:
Comparing Postsecondary Education Options

Directions: You will have three minutes to read the questions and write your answers.

Questions:

1. Prediction: What fraction or percentage of today's fastest-growing jobs require education after high school? Explain why you chose that percentage. (For example, 2 out of 5, or 40%.)

2. In a few sentences, explain what you plan to do after you graduate from high school.

STUDENT PROFILES

Read each student profile. Then check the postsecondary option that best fits each student.

Student 1

Name: Evan Brown

Career Goal: Auto mechanic

Situation: Wants to work as soon as possible
Knows he wants to work with cars
Learns best in small classes

Postsecondary Options:

Community College	<input type="checkbox"/>
Career/Technical School	<input type="checkbox"/>
Four-year College	<input type="checkbox"/>

Student 2

Name: Melinda Potter

Career Goal: Bookkeeper

Situation: Not much money saved for college
Needs to be near home to care for younger siblings
Has a part-time job

Postsecondary Options:

Community College	<input type="checkbox"/>
Career/Technical School	<input type="checkbox"/>
Four-year College	<input type="checkbox"/>

Student 3

Name: Angie Garcia

Career Goal: Something in biology-related field (maybe pediatrician)

Situation: Would like to live away from home, on-campus
Is interested in taking lots of different kinds of courses
Wants to go to medical school one day

Postsecondary Options:

Community College	<input type="checkbox"/>
Career/Technical School	<input type="checkbox"/>
Four-year College	<input type="checkbox"/>

Student 4

Name: Rob Johnson

Career Goal: Investment banker

Situation: Works 9-5 job as a bank teller
Can't afford to live on-campus yet, but would like to one day
Would like to make a lot of money in future

Postsecondary Options:

Community College	<input type="checkbox"/>
Career/Technical School	<input type="checkbox"/>
Four-year College	<input type="checkbox"/>

YOUR STUDENT PROFILE

Name: _____

Career Goal: _____

Postsecondary Options:

Community College	<input type="checkbox"/>
Career/Technical School	<input type="checkbox"/>
Four-year College	<input type="checkbox"/>

Provide three specific reasons why you believe this postsecondary option is the best fit for you.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Postsecondary Options Pros & Cons

List one pro and one con for each type of postsecondary option.

	Community College	Career and Technical Schools	4-Year College or University
Pro			
Con			

Education After High School Glossary

Academic skills: skills related to school subjects, such as reading, writing, and computation.

ACT/SAT: primarily multiple choice tests of mathematical and English abilities that are required by many colleges and universities for admission into an **undergraduate** program. (The SAT has recently added a writing section, which some colleges will also consider.)

Advanced Placement (AP) Classes: challenging courses that give students the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school through successfully completing end of the course exams.

Associate's Degree: a two-year degree, usually earned at a community college.

Award letter: mailed from a college to a prospective student, states the amount and type of financial aid the school will provide if you take classes there.

Baccalaureate Degree: a four-year degree from a college or university. Also referred to as a bachelor's degree.

Campus: the grounds and buildings of a university, college, or school.

Career & Technical School: a school that provides training in occupational or vocational areas. Many offer technical programs that prepare students for immediate entry into the job market.

Common Application: a standard application form that is accepted by almost three hundred private colleges. It is available at www.commonapp.org and in high school counselor offices. (NOTE: Many public colleges and universities require their own application instead.)

Community College: 2-year college that offers a degree after the completion of two years of full-time study.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC): the amount your family can afford to pay for college, as calculated on the FAFSA.

Facilities: a building where specific activities occur. ex: computer labs, dance studios, sports complex, dining halls, etc.

Faculty: professors at a university, college, or school.

Financial Aid: any type of assistance used to pay college costs.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): form that must be completed to receive federal financial aid. Determines how much financial help your family can be expected to contribute to your college education.

Grant: also called gift aid, a grant is financial aid that doesn't have to be repaid. Grant aid comes from federal and state governments and from individual colleges, usually on the basis of financial need.

Loans: financial aid, often from the federal government, that must be repaid.

Major: your field of specialization in college.

Personal qualities: characteristics that tell what kind of person you are, such as leadership, dependability, and motivation.

Postsecondary Education: any education that occurs after the completion of a high school diploma or general education development tests (GED).

Reference: a statement about a student's ability or character

Remedial Course: a course that teaches skills required to succeed in college-level courses.

Scholarships: funds for college distributed according to requirements set by the scholarship provider, like excellence in academics or sports.

Student Aid Report (SAR): e-mailed or mailed from the office of Federal Student Aid to the student after the FAFSA has been completed. Includes all the information you provided, as well as your Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

Undergraduate: a student enrolled in an associate's or bachelor's degree program (2- or 4-year degrees).

Work-Study Program: a federal program that provides students with part-time employment, often on campus, to help meet their financial needs.

Comparing Postsecondary Options

Complete the sentences using information about each type of postsecondary education option.

So many choices for education after high school! Describe what each option offers.



Community College

Students who complete two years of community college earn an _____ degree.

One purpose for community college is to train for _____ entry into the job market.

Some students start their education at community college, and then transfer to a _____.

Tuition and fees at a community college average less than half of those at a _____.

Community colleges offer _____ class sizes.

A community college professor's main job is _____.

Career and Technical School

Career/technical schools offer courses that allow a student to start a career in a [check correct box] specific general field.

Career and technical schools offer licenses or certificates in "skilled" careers, such as

Students who work full-time can take _____ and _____ courses.

Four-Year Colleges & Universities

Four-year colleges and universities offer

[check correct box] general education specific skill training.

Some common fields of study at four-year colleges and universities include:

Four-year colleges and universities lay the ground for more advanced studies and

_____ work.

Most high-paying jobs require a _____
degree.

At four-year colleges and universities, students learn to express themselves clearly in speech
and _____.