

College and Career Expectations: The Myths and Facts



Students and their parents expect they'll finish high school and go to college. The numbers are astonishing and unfortunately all too familiar – while *four in five high school students expect to complete a college degree, fewer than a third will actually emerge from the high-school-to-college pipeline with a baccalaureate six years after high school graduation.* A growing number of parents see a college degree as absolutely necessary for their child's success, and more students believe that they will attain this goal. But the sad fact is that only one in three will complete a college degree. This article examines the gap between educational aspirations, what students (and parents) need to do to achieve those expectations, and what the School City of Hobart can do to better communicate to students and parents the importance of being academically prepared for college and the steps to take to achieve that level of preparation.

Students and their parents are misinformed about what it takes to prepare for college.

While most students voice the expectation that they will go to college, many in fact do not know what kind of preparation it takes to get there. One of the 10 student *misperceptions* about preparing for and attending college, according to the report *Betraying the College Dream* by Andrea Venezia, Michael Kirst and Anthony Antonio, is that “*meeting high school graduation requirements will prepare me for college.*”

They note other related *misperceptions* students have about the impact of their high school course taking on chances for college admission:

- “*It's better to take easier classes in high school and get better grades.*”
- “*My senior year in high school doesn't matter.*”
- “*I don't have to worry about my grades, or the kind of classes I take, until my sophomore year.*”
- “*Community colleges don't have academic standards.*”

Overall, many students are very confused or misinformed about how they should prepare for college. Students have vague understandings of specific admission and placement policies.

*Fewer than 1/3
of high school
students actually
graduate from
college!*

Parents who are involved in their child's education can be a strong and positive influence on the student's academic achievement and postsecondary plans.

While survey results supported the strong influence parents had on future planning, focus group results indicated that parents often lacked the tools and resources necessary to help students through the postsecondary planning process. *The primary contributions of parents were their motivation, good intentions, and encouragement.*

Parents who have educational planning knowledge and timely information can increase their students' school success, facilitate their college planning, and increase the likelihood that their children will attend college.

Although highly motivated and well-intentioned, parents were not always able to provide useful information and direction to their children. The School City of Hobart chooses to engage parents in educational and post-high school planning by focusing on major points in the process and when this can effectively happen. We will deliver educational information to parents, including ways that we can involve parents in their children's planning and decision making at key transition points:

- Academic preparation—including program and course selection
- Understanding and using test information
- Formulating post-high school plans
- Learning about and obtaining financial aid for college

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School City of Hobart will help parents at key information points in the post-high school planning process, by providing information about:

- The importance of a postsecondary education
- The college admissions process
- Planning a middle school and high school course of study
- Exploring values, interests, and abilities
- Tests involved in early college planning and in the college admissions process
- The importance of involvement in school and community activities
- Potential careers and college majors
- Paying for college costs
- Visiting colleges
- Resources available in the school, on the Internet, and in the community for post-high school planning