The video Building a College Portfolio stresses the importance of collecting items throughout the middle and high school years so students will be able to access important documents, letters, grades, college information, etc. when needed for college and scholarship applications. This activity is an introduction to the planning process involved in building a college portfolio.

**Suggested Activities**

**Using the video Building a College Portfolio and follow-up discussion**

- Introduce the short video Building a College Portfolio by telling students that Carlos’ sister’s trip to college reinforces the importance of Carlos planning ahead to prepare for his own trip to college in a few years. They would plan ahead for a ski trip or a trip to the beach—and planning ahead for college is even more important.

- Ask students to tell how a portfolio might be helpful in planning for college. Discuss the benefits of a portfolio in the college application process. Ask about the method Carlos used to keep his portfolio organized.

**Portfolio Activity**

- This exercise is designed to help students understand what should go in each portfolio section.

  Before class begins, prepare nine large sheets of paper with a heading on each one using the sections of the portfolio mentioned in the video:

  - Academic Information
  - Awards and Kudos
  - Extracurricular Activities
  - Community Service
  - Interest Inventory
  - Sample Assignments
  - Job History
  - Personal Information
  - College Resources

  Note

  You can also use overhead transparencies with these titles or adhesive-backed flip chart pages. Use whatever resources your classroom has to make it easier for students to share their responses.

  Divide the class into nine groups. (If there are not enough students for at least nine groups, some groups will need to do more than one portfolio section.) Ask each group to brainstorm examples of things that would go in that section of the portfolio. After students have had sufficient time to generate ideas, ask each group to share their ideas with the class. Once a group has made their presentation, ask the other members of the class if they have additional ideas to add to the list. These ideas should be added to the page and then the group should return their completed page to you.

  Tell the class that they have just completed their packing list for their trip to the land of college applications and admissions.

  If possible, consolidate the lists and make a copy of the complete list for each student. This can become their packing guide or table of contents.
Possible Extensions

- If possible, help students develop a college planning portfolio. The presenter’s guide to creating a portfolio is included in this lesson.

- Paper-based portfolios are inexpensive to create. The following materials are suggested:
  - An expanding file folder (expands to at least 3”) with 5 dividers and tabs: If the folder is not divided, five individual file folders or dividers may be used and placed in the expanding folder.
  - Tabs for each subsection that address the categories listed below on the checklist: Write-on tabs work best, but the tabs could be pre-printed if time and costs allow.
  - Checklists of categories and sample documents: Sample checklists are included below and may be printed for each student.

If students are working in a lab or with a number of electronic files, they might be encouraged to create their portfolio on a USB drive or a rewritable CD. They will need to make edits and additions to the portfolio over time. Create a diagram of the folder structure of an electronic portfolio to guide creation.

Some school districts use online student portfolio systems to track college and career preferences and information. Ask the guidance counselor if you are unsure of availability on your campus.

Note

If the portfolios will be stored at the school, ensure that students do not add personal information which could be compromised, including social security numbers and tax information. If students build electronic portfolios, encourage them to password-protect the drive. Talk with your school’s guidance counselor or student data clerk if you are concerned about data safety.

Journal

Invite students to write a journal entry that focuses their attention on a plan for adding to the portfolio. Use this prompt:

So far, I have collected the following items for my college portfolio…

I can see that I need to find items for these categories:

These checklists will help students organize their portfolios. Make a copy for each student if possible.
Why should students keep a portfolio?
A student portfolio is a way of collecting and organizing academic, extracurricular and job-related experiences. It will be helpful to students when they begin to think about post-secondary (after high school graduation) options. That’s where the portfolio comes into the picture. It is a compilation of work that reflects what was most important to a high school student and how he/ she managed time and responsibilities – very important indicators of future success. The portfolio is designed to provide a place for students to get it all together and remember where they put it!

What should be kept in a portfolio?
A portfolio may contain a variety of things. It would certainly contain work samples that represent a student’s best efforts, but it also may include items that show progress over time.

For example, let’s say a student struggled through an algebra class and made a pretty low grade, but repeated the class in summer school and then went on the next year to make a “B+” in geometry! It would be a good idea to keep those records. A paragraph or two about the hard work and effort it took to improve in a specific area would go a long way with a job or college recruiter. It would give recruiters a much better idea of the student’s qualities than they would get by reviewing only grades.

The portfolio has several dividers to guide the collection of items and information that will be helpful over the next few years. Parents and students should work together to keep the portfolio current. A few written impressions by the student should also be included to reflect future goals. High school years go by pretty fast, so it’s a good idea to get it together along the way!

What are the categories on the tabs and sample items that might be collected in the portfolio?

- Personal Information
- Job History/Community Service
- Academic Information
- Resources
- Extracurricular Activities

1. Personal Information
Whether registering for a college entrance test, completing financial aid forms, or actually applying for college admission, personal information is always required. Frequently required documentation includes:

- income tax return (parent and student) from the current year;
- W-2 information and records of untaxed income;
- birth certificate;
- immunization record;
- social security number (copies for parents and student) or alien registration number if not a U.S. citizen;
- driver’s license number;
- parent’s education and profession; and
- special needs/ modifications.

2. Academic Information
Basically, colleges are all about academics. Course selections, grades, and achievements in high school are good indicators of how well a student will do in college. To show progress over time, consider including:

- A complete transcript listing course grades, class rank and size, GPA (grade point average and scale), advanced courses (Pre-Advanced Placement, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate), and diploma date;
- transcripts from colleges or universities showing dual credit;
- sample assignments;
- test scores, including TAKS, PSAT, ACT, and SAT results;
- academic recognition;
- examples of improvement;
- teacher or counselor recommendations;
- academic camps and summer/college classes attended; and
- reflections on the types of classes that the student found most interesting.
3. Extracurricular Activities

Postsecondary admissions officers and future employers are looking for well-rounded students. These types of activities suggest to others the kinds of things students are involved in when they are not in classes. It is important to include evidence of and reflections on experiences gained from involvement in groups and activities such as:

- involvement résumé showing membership in clubs and organizations, dates of membership, leadership roles and committee participation;
- student government role and responsibilities;
- participation in special interest groups, athletics, band, etc.;
- accomplishments or contributions to the organizations; and
- educational travel.

4. Job History/Community Service

Both of these areas are of importance to colleges and employers. Job experience indicates an ability to utilize skills and manage time effectively, while being an active participant in the community means a student is taking responsibility for bettering the world in which he or she lives. This section might include:

- résumé of work experience;
- work commendations;
- employee evaluations and recommendations;
- skills learned and reflections on possible career interests;
- community or school sponsored service projects;
- church and/or civic organizations; and
- special recognition or achievement.

5. Resources

It takes a lot to prepare for college academically, financially, and emotionally! The sooner students and their families begin preparing for college the better their chances of success once they get there. This section can be used to keep track of helpful information, including information from colleges, financial aid resources, application information, or timelines. Helpful information is available through the following websites (to name only a few):

- College For All Texans (www.collegeforalltexans.com)
- College.gov (www.college.gov)
- ApplyTexas (www.applytexas.org)

Be sure to share any local resources or point students toward information on your high school or district’s site.

Remember, a portfolio reflects the personality of the student and indicates how well that student is preparing for life after graduation. It helps them to build a picture of the person they will be after high school and make thoughtful and information decisions for their future!
Place this document in the “Personal Information” section of your College Planning Portfolio to help you keep track of what you have…and what you still need to find!

- **Income tax return (current year), W-2 information, and records of untaxed income**
  
  **Notes:**

- **Driver’s license number**
  
  **Notes:**

- **Birth certificate**
  
  **Notes:**

- **Social Security Number or Alien Registration Number, if not a U.S. citizen**
  
  **Notes:**

- **Immunization record**
  
  **Notes:**

- **Special needs/modifications**
  
  **Notes:**
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<td>Complete high school transcript, including course grades, GPA and class rank, advanced courses, and diploma date; include college or university transcripts if you have taken dual credit.</td>
<td>Teacher or counselor recommendations.</td>
<td>Test scores, including TAKS, PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, and ACT.</td>
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<td>Sample assignments.</td>
<td>Teacher or counselor recommendations.</td>
<td>Academic camps and summer/college classes attended.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples of improvement.</td>
<td>Reflections on the types of classes which were most interesting.</td>
<td>Academic recognitions.</td>
<td>Academic recognitions.</td>
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Involvement resume listing membership in clubs and organizations, including leadership roles, committee membership, and comments about accomplishments

Notes:

Participation in special interest groups, athletics, band, etc.

Notes:

Educational travel

Notes:

Student government participation

Notes:

Reflections on the experiences gained from these activities

Notes:
Job History/Community Service Checklist

Place this document in the “Job History and Community Service” section of your College Planning Portfolio to help you keep track of what you have…and what you still need to find!

- Resume of work experience
  Notes:

- Work recommendations and employee evaluations
  Notes:

- Community or school sponsored service projects
  Notes:

- Church and/or civic organizations
  Notes:

- Special recognition or achievement
  Notes:

- Skills learned and reflections on possible career interests
  Notes:
THERE ARE MANY RESOURCES ON THE WEB, SO FOR MORE INFORMATION, CHECK OUT:

- College For All Texans (www.collegeforalltexans.com)
- College.gov (www.college.gov)
- ApplyTexas (www.applytexas.org)
- The Common Application (www.commonapp.org)
- Own Your Own Future (www.ownyourownfuture.com)
- Guidance counselor’s corner on your high school’s website
- PSAT and SAT testing deadlines (www.collegeboard.org)
- PLAN and ACT testing deadlines (www.act.org)

OWN IT!
Note the URL and a short description of your favorite college websites here: