Looking Toward the Future: Why Go to College?

Education plays an important role in preparing a person for the type of work he/she plans to do, and many jobs require more than a high school diploma. While in high school, students need to spend some time thinking about their postsecondary options. Continuing their education after high school is certainly going to give them more options for occupations and better chances of being hired.

But what if your teen isn’t sure that he or she wants to go to college? What can a parent say when a teen says “why go to college?” Use the statements below to start a conversation with your child about college and the benefits a degree offers. Use the guiding questions to personalize the discussion and help students think through their own opinions about education after high school. Remind your teen that you believe he or she will succeed in college.

1. Don’t be left out
   • College teaches you how to learn, as well as what to learn.
   • Skills in problem-solving and familiarity with technology will be required in most 21st century jobs.
   • People change jobs several times in their careers. Postsecondary education gives you the skills necessary to adapt to new ventures.

   Talk it over:
   • What skills are needed in the work you are interested in doing?
   • Where is the best place to learn those skills (college, on-the-job, military, technical school)?
   • What is the earning potential for a high school education vs. a postsecondary degree?
   • I want you to have an education beyond high school so you will be able to ____________________________.

2. Love what you do
   • When you have the education you need for a certain job, things just click.
   • Education allows you to develop interests and abilities to build a career, not just do a job.
   • There are a wide variety of postsecondary options that will fit your needs.

   Talk it over:
   • Ask your teen: Who comes to mind when you think of someone who LOVES their job? How do you know?
   • What education was required for their profession? No matter what the job, there is always training required after high school.
   • Tell your teen why you chose your occupation and what kind of education was involved.
3. Get out there and mix it up
   • College is a way to meet new people and learn about new places, cultures and viewpoints.
   • Not everyone is like you. Take the opportunity to widen your circle of friends and experiences.

   Talk it over:
   • How do you think college will expand your world?
   • What could you learn about living somewhere else?
   • Here is what I learned when I lived away from home ________________

4. Earn a higher income
   • Money isn’t everything, but it helps you become independent.

   Talk it over
   • What do you want for yourself and your family?
   • A good income could help you in the following ways: ____________________________

5. Have fun learning
   • Sure, college is a lot of hard work, but it will open your mind to new ideas, skills and associations.
   • College will challenge your mind and help you become a lifelong learner.

   Talk it over:
   • What interests you?
   • What would you like to learn more about?
   • What college might be a good choice for that?
   • Personally, I think you would be good at ____________________________
   I believe you can do it.