

College Prep. 101

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The future, more specifically high school graduation, is something most, if not all, teens think about and look forward to. As graduation gets closer, questions from teens and adults arise such as, "Which college will I attend?", "What will my major be?", and "How in the world are we going to pay for this?" It should be comforting to know that you are not alone. In fact, 2.94 million students graduate from more than 27,000 high schools each year in the United States (msnbc.com). While some of this information can be overwhelming, here are some things to stay focused on as you help your teen down the road to graduation. The first thing you must do is be prepared! Find out all the information you can about each college your teen is considering. Talk to students who attend those schools and ask what they think. Look on the Internet to read and study the newest **US News and World Report's** college ranking report (www.usnews.com/usnews/rankguide/rghome.htm). If possible, go visit the campus. Spending a few hundred dollars to find out your teen does not like a college is better than spending thousands on a semester of misery. Second, remember that behind every successful teen, there is a supportive network. If you look at the enrollment of the most competitive colleges, you'll find that most of the kids who attend have been assisted enormously by families, mentors, community members, teachers, or all of the above (msnbc.com). Third, remember that God is in control. Through all of the waiting, disappointment, excitement, and worry, God will use your tireless preparation, never-ending support, and countless prayers to reveal His perfect plan.

As you prepare for college, here are the Top 10 things colleges are looking for in high school students:

1. A high school curriculum that challenges the student.
2. Grades that represent strong effort and an upward trend throughout their four years in high school.
3. Solid scores on standardized tests (SAT, ACT).
4. Passionate involvement in a few activities, demonstrating leadership and initiative.
5. Community service showing evidence of being a "contributor."
6. Work or out-of-school experiences (including summer activities) that illustrate responsibility.
7. A well-written essay that provides insight into the student's unique personality, values, and goals.
8. Letters of recommendation from teachers and guidance counselors that give evidence of integrity, special skill, and positive character traits.
9. Supplementary recommendations by adults who have had significant direct contact with the student.
10. Anything special that makes the student stand out from the rest of the applicants!
(familyeducation.com)

Pulse

Some interesting thoughts on college...

After graduation, I plan to:

- 65% - Go to college or a trade school.
- 15% - Get a job.
- 15% - Figure it out when the time comes.
- 5% - Travel around for a while.

(libraryloft.org)

Christian teens who go to college or a university should...

- 21% - Attend a Christian institution.
- 3% - Attend a secular institution.
- 61% - Pick based on interests and personality.
- 16% - Attend wherever they can afford!

(pluggedinonline.com)

The Parent POV

(point of view)

Planning for the future takes hard work and perseverance, but it really does pay off in the end. Here are some questions to ask your teen as they prepare for college and their future.

1. What do you like to do for fun? Why? If you had to do something all day long, what would it be and why?
2. Do you think college is necessary to meet the goals you have set for yourself? Why or why not?
3. If you could pick your dream college, what would it be? What needs to happen to make this dream a reality?
4. Where does God fit in as you plan for the future? Do you think He has a plan for you? How do you figure this plan out?



Focus on Prayer

Pray that:

1. God will reveal His plan for your son/daughter in a real and clear way.
2. God will give your teen the desire to do things with excellence in every area of their lives as they grow to become godly adults.
3. As parents, you will be able to support and encourage your teen in whatever profession or passion they pursue.
4. God will allow you to see every obstacle in getting ready for college as an opportunity to grow in your relationship with Christ.

Verse of the month

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

Isn't it a comforting thought to know that God has the perfect plan just for you? Isn't it even MORE comforting to know that God has the perfect plan for your teen? Jeremiah is writing to the Israelite exiles to encourage them in their distress. While getting ready to send your teen to college isn't as stressful as exile from your own country, it still can be a source of major concern. As a parent, you have your own dreams and desires for your teen. May your desires never get in the way of what God wants to do. While we might not see the whole picture right now, you must hold on to God's promise that His ways are to prosper and not to harm His children. Our hope is secure because it is in Him. What a comforting thought to know that our future is secure here on earth and in heaven.



Did you know...

- * In October 2005, 68.6% of high school graduates from the class of 2005 were enrolled in colleges or universities. (bls.gov)
- * Attending a public four-year college nationwide costs an average of \$15,783 per year, while attending a private four-year college nationwide costs an average of \$22,218 per year for tuition and fees. (readyssetgotocollege.com)
- * Students who engage in extracurricular activities in college are the happiest students as well as the most successful in the classroom. They seem to find a way to connect their academic work to their personal lives. (msnbc.com)
- * 107 students out of 300,000 test takers received perfect scores of 2400 on the first round of the new SATs in 2005 (msnbc.com)

Music alternative

This hip-hop Christian group, The Cross Movement, is comprised of The Ambassador, The Tonic, Phanatic, and T.R.U. – L.I.F.E. "The CM has chosen to define itself as the Christian division of hip-hop culture as opposed to the hip-hop/rap division of Christian culture." They believe they are "instructed by Jesus to remain a part of hip-hop culture while being set apart from the majority of its followers...in order to influence it from within to conform to the moral code preached by mainstream Christianity." The CM is also a record label and a ministry which "aims to use creative ways to spread the gospel message within hip-hop culture." crossmovementrecords.com

trends

If you had to choose just one type of music to listen to exclusively, which would it be? (Top 5 listed)

- 27% - Hip-hop/rap
- 23% - Pop
- 17% - Rock/punk
- 7% - Alternative
- 6% - Christian/gospel

(usaweekend.com)

musicspotlight



Albums:

"Late Night Special"
1/2007

"Bluestars" - 5/2005

Background: Brothers - Spectacular, Pleasure, Slick Em, and Baby Blue - make up the quartet, Pretty Ricky. The group first exploded onto the Miami music circuit in 1997. Their Atlantic debut, Bluestars, "was one of the best selling albums of 2005" and quickly reached Gold status. Through such venues as online chats and Myspace, Pretty Ricky has been pushing their most recent album, Late Night Special. It is the biggest-selling chart debut of 2007 reaching the number one spot on both Billboard 200 and Top R&B/Hip-Hop albums' charts.

What Parents Should Know: Both of their albums contain a Parental Advisory warning. The newest album is full of sex including phone sex and sex with underage girls. It contains foul language; direct and indirect.

Parent/Teen Q&A: "Known for their explicit sexual references on tracks like 'Grind With Me' and 'Juicy', they have addressed this controversial notoriety with an innovatively moral marketing strategy for this new album. 'We're putting out two albums; one's clean and one's dirty. The same tracks but with different lyrics; one's about making love and one's about being in love'. Q: Do you think it's OK to listen to a "clean" version of an album? Why or why not?"



filmwatch

The thriller and the comedy are KING. Here are just a few movies teens will want to see this month.

TITLE	RATING	RED FLAGS	GENRE	STARRING
The Reaping	R	For violence, disturbing images, and some sexuality	Thriller	Hilary Swank, David Morrissey, AnnaSophia Robb
Are We Done Yet?	PG	For some innuendo and brief language	Comedy	Ice Cube, Nia Long, Tahj Mowery
Full of It	PG-13	For sexual content, drug references, teen partying, and crude humor	Comedy	Ryan Pinkston, Kate Mara, Joshua Close, Teri Polo, Carmen Electra