

What Can I Do Now?

The **BIG** Idea

- What short-term goals can I set for myself to prepare for my high school graduation?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: Looking Back, Looking Ahead (5 minutes)
- II. Graduation Requirements (10 minutes)
- III. Academic Skills Self-Evaluation (25 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up: Short-Term Goal (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

PORTFOLIO PAGES:

- Portfolio page 15, My Four-Year Plan
- Portfolio page 16, My Education Plan: 10th Grade Performance
- Portfolio page 17, Current Courses I Need to Improve My Grade(s) In

STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 123, It's Not Magic

FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, SAMPLE My Education Plan: 10th Grade Performance
- Facilitator Resource 2, Current Courses I Need to Improve My Grade(s) In

Overhead projector

Copies of Academic Resource List (see Preparation)

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Understand which courses are required for high school graduation in their state or district.
- Evaluate their current academic performance and set short-term goals for improvement.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students investigate what they can do now to prepare for their high school graduation. They begin by recording the classes they will have completed by the end of sophomore year. Then, they review the state or district requirements for graduation. Next, students review their current academic record to identify classes in need of improvement. Finally, they set academic goals to improve their grades in these classes.

PREPARATION

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Write the day's vocabulary words and definitions on the board.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
 - **Student Handbook page 123, It's Not Magic**
 - **Portfolio page 15, My Four-Year Plan**
 - **Portfolio page 16, My Education Plan: 10th Grade Performance**
 - **Facilitator Resource 1, SAMPLE My Education Plan: 10th Grade Performance**
 - **Facilitator Resource 2, Current Courses I Need to Improve My Grade(s) In**
- These next two lessons are designed to help students prepare for their meetings with the school counselor to select courses for 11th grade; be sure to coordinate with the counselor to become better acquainted with the processes involved. In addition, you may wish to invite your school counselor to serve as a co-facilitator of this lesson. Having him/her present will be incredibly valuable in answering students' specific questions.
- You will need to identify and assemble necessary information and forms for your district to guide the course selection process for 10th graders choosing courses for the 11th grade. This packet of information should include district or state requirements for graduation, a listing of 11th and 12th grade courses, the course selection card or form, and any other information needed to help students and their parents understand the 11th grade course selection process.
- For **Activity III, Academic Skills Self-Evaluation**, ask your school counselor if it's possible to access a copy of each student's transcript.

- ❑ In advance of teaching this lesson, you should research what resources are available in your host school and community for students who may need additional academic support. The school counselor might have documents that you can use. Get school administration approval on any outside resources that you would like to include. Create a list of resources to distribute to students and review during the discussion of goal-setting.
- ❑ Create a chart that spells out what each letter in SMART goals stands for.
S = Specific (detailed, not general or vague)
M = Measurable (includes some quantity or element that can be measured)
A = Attainable (ambitious but reasonable; often breaks large goals into smaller pieces)
R = Realistic (person is willing and able to do the work for this goal)
T = Timed (establishes a time frame for accomplishing the goal)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

No matter what students' post-secondary school plans include—attending college or seeking employment—they need to prepare for life beyond high school. Whether they are applying to college or for a job, students must be equipped with the academic skills necessary to succeed. And now is the time, while they're still in high school, to strengthen these skills. By self-evaluating their academic skills and setting reasonable short-term goals, students are preparing themselves for life beyond high school.

VOCABULARY

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

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

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

You may also wish to change the courses listed in **Facilitator Resource 1, SAMPLE My Education Plan: 10th Grade Performance** to reflect courses offered at your school.

In **Activity III, Academic Skills Self-Evaluation**, to help students engage more with **Student Handbook page 123, It's Not Magic**, have them place a Y or an N next to each question. Then instruct students to circle two or three questions they would like to begin working on.

If you think you will finish this lesson early, you may want to pair students up and have each student assess his/her partner's action plans using the SMART goal criteria.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up: Looking Back, Looking Ahead (5 minutes)

1. [To begin this lesson, as students enter the classroom, direct their attention to **Portfolio page 15, My Four-Year Plan**. Give students a few minutes to complete the ninth and 10th grade columns of this chart, reminding them to leave the 11th and 12th grade columns blank. Let students know that they will fill these in next week when they complete their four-year plans.]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Welcome, everybody. When you came in today, you started to fill out a four-year plan. To begin, you listed the high school classes that you took in ninth grade along with the classes you are currently taking. This is an essential step in determining which classes you'll take next year. Next week, we'll talk about selecting courses for your junior year. Before you can choose those classes, we're going to review some important criteria: the graduation requirements for our district/state and your academic performance from ninth and 10th grade. By the end of today, you're going to create an action plan to improve your grades in any classes where you are struggling. Our goal is to get everyone on track to graduate in two years.

II. Graduation Requirements (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** How many of you want to graduate from high school? Of course, you all do! So that's the first thing we want to consider when choosing courses for next year. Let's take a look at what's required in our district/state.
2. [Hand out the list of district/state requirements for graduation, and show a copy on a projector. Review the credits for each subject required by your district/state.]
3. [Give students a few minutes to review the requirements and compare them to the first two years of their own four-year plan.]
4. [Take a few minutes to let students ask questions about these requirements.]

III. Academic Skills Self-Evaluation (25 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** The next thing to consider is the courses that are needed to succeed in college. Are you prepared to do college-level work? Believe it or not, 50

percent of students entering a two-year college and 20 percent of students entering a four-year college* end up taking remedial courses, or “catch-up” classes, just to gain the skills they need to do college-level work. These classes do not count towards earning your degree. The cost of just one college course can range from several hundred to more than a thousand dollars! (This is money better spent earning credits toward your degree.) So, what can you do now to avoid taking “catch-up” classes later?

*SOURCE: Complete College America report: <http://www.completecollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-summary.pdf>

The first step is to take a good look at how you’re doing in school right now. Then, make a plan for how you can improve your grades.

2. [Draw students’ attention to **Portfolio page 16, My Education Plan: 10th Grade Performance** as you display **Facilitator Resource 1, SAMPLE My Education Plan: 10th Grade Performance** on the overhead projector. Show only the Career and Long-Term Goal section.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: When thinking about how to prepare yourself for college, or a job, it’s helpful to begin with the end in mind. Start with your big goal, then think of the smaller steps you need to take to get there. Let me show you how this works.

[Model how to fill in the “Career” and “Long-Term Goal” section. Next to “Career,” at the top, jot down an example, such as “Teacher.”]

2. [Direct students’ attention to the “Long-Term Goal” section of the displayed portfolio page.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Once you identify a career, the next step is to figure out what post-secondary education, if any, you need. Check the appropriate box. For example, to be a teacher, you need to go to a four-year college, so I will check that box. When you complete your own education plan, if you’re not sure how much education your top career choice requires, flip back to **Portfolio pages 7–8, Career Reflection** to review your research. [Display the page numbers on the board or overhead projector.]

4. [Direct students’ attention to the “How Am I Doing?” section of the displayed portfolio page.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: In this next section, you will evaluate how you're doing in each of your classes, so you'll know where to focus your energy. You are going to list the classes you're taking, and your grade in each class. If you're not certain of your grade right now, think about the grade you got last semester, or on your last test.

In this section you will be asking yourself: *What do I need to improve in order to prepare myself for my future education?*

In my case, what classes do I need to improve in? [Allow students to respond. Then circle or underline the two courses with the lowest grades (English and science).]

5. [Direct students' attention to the **Facilitator Resource 2, Current Courses I Need to Improve My Grade(s) In**. Make sure to cover up all of the science row. For the English row, only display the box titled "Reason for Low Performance."]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: The next step is to identify small, realistic actions you can take right away that will help you reach your big goal. By identifying these actions, and setting a date for each, you increase your chance of making your longer-term goals a reality.

[Have a volunteer read the "Reason for Low Performance" in English. Then ask the class what goal this student should work for. Allow students to respond, and then show the listed desired grade. Then ask the class what realistic actions you can take to improve your C grade in English. Jot their ideas on chart paper. (If students have difficulty identifying small steps, refer to **Student Handbook page 123, It's Not Magic**, for ideas.)

Once you have heard from a few students, display the "Action Plan" for raising your English grade.]

6. Those of you who had Roads to Success last year will remember SMART goals. Today we are going to focus on the first three parts of SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, and Achievable.
7. [Write the following questions below on chart paper, an overhead, or the board. Ask the students the following questions and write down how the action plan for improving your English grade fits each of these criteria.
 - a. Is my goal Specific?
 - b. Is it Measurable?
 - c. Is it Achievable?]

8. [If your students are struggling to understand SMART goals, repeat the steps above for the science class. In addition, you may want to brainstorm as a class some solutions to address one or two students' reasons for low performance in a class. Make sure that students understand that they are personally responsible for improving their grades. For example, students should not blame a poor grade on a teacher they do not get along with. You can acknowledge that it can be difficult working with someone you don't like, but that is bound to happen to them at some point in their life. Learning how to overcome those types of challenges will help them in the future.]

Once you think your students are ready to make their own action plans, have them complete **Portfolio page 17, Current Courses I Need to Improve My Grade(s) In.** Instruct the students that they will have 10 minutes to complete these pages.]

[**Note:** It is important for students to understand that they should aim for the highest grades possible. If they are only aiming to pass their classes, they will be unfamiliar with a lot of the material they'll need to succeed in college.]

IV. Wrap Up: Short-Term Goal (5 minutes)

1. [Have a few volunteers share a course they need to improve in with the class. Students should read their reasons for low performance and their action plan (Strategy to Raise My Grade). If time permits, ask the class if the goal is Specific? Measurable? And Achievable?]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** As you discovered today, your academic skills will influence your post-secondary plans. Strong academic skills reveal to a college or employer that you have what it takes to succeed. So, set your goals, work hard, and you will be well-prepared.

SAMPLE My Education Plan: 10th Grade Performance

CAREER: _____

LONG-TERM GOAL: What post-secondary education do I need?

- none
- apprenticeship
- tech or trade school
- two-year college
- four-year college
- more than four years of college

HOW AM I DOING? Below, list the courses you're taking and your grade in each.

COURSE NAME	REQUIREMENT	GRADE
1. MATH	Yes	A
2. ENGLISH	Yes	C
3. SOCIAL STUDIES	Yes	B
4. SCIENCE	Yes	D
5. SPANISH	Yes	B
6. ART: PAINTING	Yes	A
7. HEALTH	Yes	A
8. PE: SOCCER	Yes	A

Current Courses I Need To Improve My Grade(s) In

Course Name	Reason for Low Performance	Desired Grade	Action Plan (Strategy to Raise My Grade)
ENGLISH	I sit next to my friend and all we do is pass notes during class. I don't pay attention, and then when it comes time to take the tests I am lost because I haven't taken notes in class.	A	I need to tell my friend that I'm in danger of not passing English, so we need to stop writing notes to each other. This will help me pay attention so that I can take notes during class. For two weeks, I will also review my notes at home for 15 minutes each school night.
SCIENCE	I try really hard in this class. I always do my homework. I take notes in class and I even study at home before the tests. No matter what I do I still can't seem to do well on the tests.	B	I need to ask my teacher whether he holds morning or after-school tutorials. I will attend at least one tutorial session a week and I will ask my teacher to help me make flashcards to study for our next test.

Adapted from the Fulfillment Fund: www.fulfillment.org

It's Not Magic

There's no magic formula for improving your grades. You are the person who can make it happen. Want to do better? Here are some things you can do to get started.

Check two or three things you can do to improve right away. **NOTE:** You have to do the things at the top of the chart before you can do the things at the bottom.

If improving your grade is your goal . . .

	Do I go to school every day?
	Do I attend class every day?
	Do I arrive in class on time, with the materials I need?
	Do I pay attention in class?
	Do I take notes?
	Do I write down the homework assignments?
	Do I have a time and place when I study for this subject?
	Do I do my homework each day?
	Do I ask questions when I don't understand something?
	Do I recognize problems (like personal problems or learning disabilities) that may make it hard for me to learn?
	Do I know where to go for extra help?
	Do I get the extra help I need?

MY FOUR-YEAR PLAN

Warm Up: Please fill in the first two columns of the chart below to record the classes you took in ninth grade along with the classes you're currently taking in 10th grade. Your teacher will provide instructions for filling in the columns for 11th and 12th grade.

Courses Taken/Planned				
SUBJECT	Ninth	10th	11th	12th
1. Math				
2. Science				
3. English/Language Arts				
4. Social Studies				
5. Foreign Language				
6. Arts				
7. Health and Physical Education				
8. Technology				
9. Electives				
10. Advanced Placement (AP) Courses				

Setting smaller goals now will help you reach your career goal after high school.



My Education Plan: 10th Grade Performance

CAREER: _____

LONG-TERM GOAL: What post-secondary education do I need?

- none
- apprenticeship
- tech or trade school
- two-year college
- four-year college
- more than four years of college

HOW AM I DOING? Below, list the courses you're taking and your grade in each.

	COURSE NAME	REQUIREMENT	GRADE
1.	MATH: _____	Yes	_____
2.	ENGLISH: _____	Yes	_____
3.	SOCIAL STUDIES: _____	Yes	_____
4.	SCIENCE: _____	Yes	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____

Current Courses I Need To Improve My Grade(s) In

Course Name	Reason for Low Performance	Desired Grade	Action Plan (Strategy to Raise My Grade)

Adapted from the Fulfillment Fund: www.fulfillment.org