

College: To Go or Not to Go?

The **BIG** Idea

- What are some reasons for and against attending college? Why is planning for college a good idea?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: Movie Clip (10 minutes)
- II. School Counselor Role Play (10 minutes)
- III. To Go or Not to Go? (15 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up (10 minutes)

MATERIALS

PORTFOLIO PAGES:

- Portfolio pages 31-33, Grade 9 Skills Checklist (Education After High School skills only)

FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW
- Facilitator Resource 2, Coach Carter Background & Discussion Prompts
- Facilitator Resource 3, October Sky Background & Discussion Prompts
- Facilitator Resource 4, Student/Counselor Role Play Statement Cards
- Facilitator Resource 5, To Go or Not to Go Prompts & Follow-Up Questions
- Facilitator Resource 6, To Go or Not to Go Research Questions

MEDIA:

- One of the following two DVDs: Coach Carter or October Sky
- DVD player and television (or other display unit)

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Summarize knowledge from previous lessons on education planning.
- Explore opposing points of view on key issues related to pursuing higher education.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students review the pros and cons of post-secondary education that they've discovered in prior Roads to Success lessons. They then share their information in small group "round robin" discussions, which ultimately prepares them for a whole-class discussion about the benefits and drawbacks of college. In the wrap up, students are prompted to recognize that for every argument about not going to college, there's a counter argument. Students who aren't sure what's right for them should realize that they can make choices that leave their college options open.

PREPARATION

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Write the day's vocabulary words and definitions on the board.
- For the **Warm Up** activity, determine which movie clip to show the class, and rent or purchase it in advance. "Coach Carter" is in an urban setting; "October Sky" is in a rural setting. Preview the movie segment students will be viewing (and for "Coach Carter," the extra material titled "The Man Behind the Movie"). Then use **Facilitator Resource 2** (Coach Carter) or **Facilitator Resource 3** (October Sky) to cue the selected DVD to the featured segment.
- For **Activity II, School Counselor Role Play**, copy and cut out **Facilitator Resource 4, Role Play Statement Cards** so that each pair is provided with one copy of each statement.
- For **Activity III, To Go or Not to Go?**, copy and cut out **Facilitator Resource 6, To Go or Not to Go? Research Questions** so that each pair is provided with one copy of each statement.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The concept of "college for all" has become a reality in America today. All students, regardless of high school achievement, are afforded the opportunity of higher education should they want to pursue it, and many students can be successful in this pursuit. This is a big change from years ago, when a college education was restricted to those students with the highest grades. Back then, those with low GPAs would likely not have considered higher education an option. Today, open-admissions policies offered by community colleges, vo-tech institutions, and some four-year

colleges have broken down the academic barriers of higher education. Ultimately, however, students must make the decision for themselves. Just because they can go to college doesn't necessarily make it the right choice for them. This lesson provides students an opportunity to think more deeply about the pros and cons of higher education based on what they've learned previously, and to begin to consider their options.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

DO NOW:

*(You may choose to present the Warm Up activity as a written Do Now. Present the questions on the board or overhead, and have students write only their answers on index cards. You could also choose to give the students a handout by copying **Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW.**)*

Directions:

For each statement below, circle whether you think the sentence is true or false. Then in one or two sentences explain why you believe that.

Statements:

1. True or False: College costs too much money and isn't worth it.
2. True or False: If you don't go to a four-year college you won't be able to get a job that pays well.
3. True or False: Only students with really high grades can go to college.

[After they have completed their answer, review The Big Idea for today's lesson, and then begin with the **Warm Up** as written.]

Warm Up: If "October Sky" or "Coach Carter" isn't readily available for rent or purchase, you may instead discuss one of the two movie scenarios described in **Facilitator Resource 2** (Coach Carter) or **Facilitator Resource 3** (October Sky). Read the scenario aloud; then ask students to respond to the conflict presented, using the questions marked with an asterisk in **Facilitator Resource 2** or **3**. Alternatively, you could discuss your own decision to attend college, and the factors that influenced your decision.

For the **Warm Up**, the suggested footage of “October Sky” is approximately seven minutes in length. If your time is limited, run the DVD to the basement scene (which is near the end of the chapter) and click pause or stop. Then play just this scene for the class. If you do shorten the clip, select the discussion questions in **Facilitator Resource 3, October Sky Background & Discussion Prompts** that are relevant to that scene.

For **Activity II, School Counselor Role Play**, if students have expressed concerns related to college other than the ones provided on the cards, and those issues have been addressed in previous lessons, you may replace them. Here are some samples you might use:

“I’ve been in school for 12 years. That’s enough! I just want a good job.”

“I can’t go to college because I just won’t fit in.”

Also, for **Activity II, School Counselor Role Play**, you may wish to have a few students in the “student” role summarize their “counselor’s” advice after each exchange.

In **Activity III, To Go or Not to Go?**, Item 2, if your students are resistant to the “reasons not to go to college” side of the argument, give each pair of students two discussion questions – one a “pro” and one a “con.”

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up: Movie Clip (10 minutes)

1. [Welcome the students and let them know how happy you are to be with them again. Tell them that they will warm up for today’s lesson by watching a movie clip.]
2. [Share background information and set a purpose for the clip by using one of the following resources: **Facilitator Resource 2, Coach Carter Background & Discussion Prompts** or **Facilitator Resource 3, October Sky Background & Discussion Prompts**.]
3. [Direct students’ attention to the television (or other display) in the front of the class. Hit play.]
4. [After the clip, follow up by asking discussion questions provided in **Facilitator Resource 2** or **3**. Allow time for students to respond.]

II. School Counselor Role Play (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Toward the end of this lesson, you will present arguments either for or against going to college. To prepare for that discussion, this activity gives you a chance to consider both points of view. You will put yourselves in the minds of students thinking about going to college and school counselors who are advising them. Everyone will have a chance to play both parts. As the “student,” you will think about the types of concerns students have as they think about college. When you play the “counselor,” you will think about what you’ve discovered from previous Roads to Success lessons about higher education.
2. [Divide the class into pairs. Assign one student in each pair the role of “student;” assign the other student the role of “school counselor.”]
3. [Provide the “student” in each pair statement card #1 from **Facilitator Resource 4, Student/Counselor Role Play Statement Cards**: “College costs too much and isn’t worth it.” Instruct those playing the “student” to read aloud the statement to their partner. Tell “counselors” that they have two minutes to counter the statement using information learned in earlier lessons. You may remind them, for example, of **The Cost of College** and **Financial Aid**, in which they discovered the benefits of going to college, what college costs, and more about paying for it. Explain that the counselor’s

job is to guide the student to recognize his/her options and the benefits of going to college. Make it clear to students that this is not to be an argument. The “student” should listen while the “counselor” talks. If time allows, you may want to ask those playing “students” to summarize what the “counselors” say.]

4. [When the two minutes are up, have pairs swap roles, so “students” are now “counselors” and vice-versa. Distribute statement card #2 from **Facilitator Resource 4, Student/Counselor Role Play Statement Cards**: “You have to be really smart to go to college” to the “student” in each pair. Repeat the same process as step 3 above. Encourage those playing “counselor” to recall **Entrance Requirements** when they used RUPrepareND.com and other sites to investigate different aspects of specific post-secondary schools, including admissions requirements.]

III. To Go or Not to Go? (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** I’d like you to remain with your partner as we consider a few more reasons to go to college . . . or not to go. I’m going to give each pair a slip of paper with one more idea about going to college. When you get your paper, work with your partner to answer your question as completely as you can. You may want to jot down a note or two so you can remember your ideas.

In five minutes, we’ll come back together as a group to discuss your answers.

2. [Distribute **Facilitator Resource 6, To Go or Not to Go Research Questions**, one question per pair, and allow students time to work.]
3. [Reconvene the group. Use the prompts and follow-ups on **Facilitator Resource 5, To Go or Not to Go Prompts & Follow-Up Questions** to guide the discussion. Note that the purpose of the discussion is to explore all possible issues, not simply to make the case for going to college.]

IV. Wrap Up (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Everyone did a terrific job today. No matter which position you take on the college issue, or even if you are not certain of your opinion yet, you’ve all learned that there are many factors to consider. And you now know how to research and find information you need when you are ready to start thinking about higher education.

[Ask: *What did you discover as you explored these issues?* Allow students a chance to respond. Guide them to recognize that for every argument about not going to college, there's a counter argument. Conclude by helping students realize that if they aren't sure yet what's best for them, they should make choices now that keep their college options open.]

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Before we finish up for today, I'd like to share some information about how ideas about going to college have changed over the last few decades.

In your grandparents' (or parents') day, school counselors often gave students brutal advice about college. Average students would routinely hear things like "you're not college material." [Ask: *What's wrong with this approach?*]

School counselors recognized this problem, and began to encourage everyone who wanted to go to college to apply. In the interest of fairness to all applicants, many schools, particularly community colleges, relaxed their admissions standards. If you had a high school diploma or a GED, and a college had space for you, you were in. This approach also had its problems. [Ask: *What problems might result when all students have access to college, whether or not they've prepared for it?*]

To make sure students were ready for advanced subjects, colleges devised tests of basic skills in reading and math. You couldn't sign up for harder courses until you'd passed these tests. Colleges offered remedial courses to help students get ready for college-level material. (The catch is that you have to pay for these courses, and they don't count toward your degree. So, it's really a lot smarter to get basic skills and learn how to study while you're in high school, when it's free.)

The people who designed Roads to Success all went to college. We believe in going to college. But it's not the only path. You are the only one who can decide if you're ready and whether it's worth the investment. We'll help you plan for your future either way.

SKILLS CHECKLIST

Direct students' attention to **Portfolio pages 31-33, Grade 9 Skills Checklist**. Have students complete the skills checklist questions for Education After High School skills.

Education After High School**I can...**

Compare the costs of different colleges and tech schools.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Describe some of the kinds of financial aid you can use to help pay college expenses.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Research the entrance requirements of colleges and tech schools.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Identify high school courses that fit my college and career goals.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Participate in extracurricular activities, volunteer work, or part-time jobs that will help me when I apply for college or a job.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Weigh the pros and cons of going to college.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well

DO NOW

Education After High School 5: College: To Go or Not to Go?

Directions: For each statement below, circle whether you think the sentence is true or false. Then in one or two sentences, explain why you believe that. You will have three minutes to complete these questions.

Statements:

1. **True or False:** College costs too much money and isn't worth it.

2. **True or False:** If you don't go to a four-year college you won't be able to get a job that pays well.

3. **True or False:** Only students with really high grades can go to college.

Coach Carter Clip Background & Discussion Prompts

“Coach Carter,” starring Samuel L. Jackson

Summarize the movie as follows:

“Coach Carter” is the true story of a high school basketball coach and the young men he inspired, both on the court and off.

When Ken Carter agrees to coach at the city high school where he was once a star athlete, he knows he has a tough job ahead. The team is losing badly. The players are angry, disrespectful, and undisciplined. Coach Carter makes them sign a contract promising to attend all classes, maintain a 2.3 grade point average, and wear a jacket and tie on game days.

Basketball practice is exhausting. No backtalk is allowed. Bad behavior is punished with sit-ups and running laps. A few players quit in frustration. But the team is soon undefeated.

Then Coach Carter finds out some of his players have been cutting classes and failing exams. What happens next astonishes the players as well as the fans. Coach Carter puts a lock on the gym door. There will be no more basketball until all players are back on track academically.

Cue DVD to the following segment:

From the start-up menu, click on “Start-up Features.” Then click on “Coach Carter: The Man Behind the Movie.” About eight minutes into this section, you’ll see a series of shots that begins with Chris Dixon, the young man in the blue jersey with the star, saying, “I love my teammates to death.” The next shot is movie footage of a basketball game. The next shot is a newspaper that says, “Richmond Beats Kennedy,” followed by players dancing in celebration in the locker room. The voice-over says, “My kids was just riding on cloud nine.”

Begin the tape at the “I love my teammates” clip and continue for about five minutes. Continue through the footage where the fictional Coach Carter talks to his kids about college being a viable option, about needing a vision. The final shot is Coach Carter on camera, saying, “If you’re looking for your kid to go pro, I’m the wrong coach. But if you’re looking for your kid to get into college, I can help ’em get into college.” (If it seems to clarify his thoughts, you can play the clip through the following quote, where a player talks about needing a plan beyond the NBA or NFL.)

Set a purpose for viewing:

In the clip you’re about to see, we hear from the real Coach Carter and his players about the team’s success and what happened when he learned they were failing their classes. Watch to see if you agree or disagree with the way the coach handled the situation.

Discussion questions following viewing:

- *1. Why did Coach Carter require more of his players (2.3 GPA) than the school did (2.0 GPA)?
2. Why didn't he let any of the players, even those with good grades, play?
3. Why were parents and fans so upset?
- *4. Was Coach Carter right or wrong to insist on high academic achievement from his team?
Explain.

October Sky Clip Background & Discussion Prompts

“October Sky,” starring Jake Gyllenhaal

Summarize the movie as follows:

“October Sky” is based on Homer Hickam Jr.’s autobiography “Rocket Boys,” in which Hickam tells the story of his struggles as a young man to escape the small mining town where he was born and reach for something more, something bigger.

Like every other boy in Coalwood, West Virginia, in 1957, Homer is heading for a life as a coal miner. His brother has found a way out through a college football scholarship, but Homer is too small for sports. This is just fine with Homer’s father, who feels his son should be a miner like himself. But when the world’s first manmade satellite, Sputnik, crosses the October skies above Coalwood, Homer’s life changes forever. Not only does Homer never intend to become a miner, *now* he’s set on a career in space engineering – one that clearly requires higher education.

Determined to build and launch a rocket of his own, Homer gets three friends to join him. Soon, the whole town is captivated by the boys’ plan to win the national science fair with one of their rockets. If they can win this million-to-one shot, they could all get scholarships to college. The only one not sharing in their dream is Homer’s dad. A lifelong miner, he feels it’s a noble profession and one that Homer should embrace. He sees the rocket building as no more than a hobby, something Homer shouldn’t consider as a career.

Cue DVD to the following segment:

From the DVD menu, select “Chapter List.” Scroll to Chapter 13: “Search for AUK 13” and hit play. Students may view from the beginning through to the end of the scene of Homer and his father in the basement. This footage is approximately seven minutes in length.

Set a purpose for viewing:

Just prior to the clip you are about to see, Homer’s teacher has encouraged him to reach for his dreams. This is particularly important advice, because Homer – against his wishes – has quit school to work in the coal mine while his father recovers from an injury. Homer and his rocket pals have quit building and launching rockets as a result of being accused of starting a fire. In this scene, inspired by his teacher to go for his goals, Homer skips work in the coal mines to search for the rocket believed to have started the fire. His father is not happy with Homer’s decisions to skip work and pursue rocketry. Watch to see if you agree or disagree with Homer’s decisions and his father’s reaction.

Discussion questions following viewing:

1. Homer's father tells him he's proud of him, but it's not for the reasons Homer hopes. Explain. What do you think Homer wishes he was proud of?
2. How does Homer feel about his father's opinion of rocket-building as a hobby as opposed to a career?
- *3. Going to college will be necessary for Homer to reach his dream of being a rocket scientist. How do you think his father feels about this?
- *4. Why does Homer's father want him to work in the coal mines, rather than pursue his dream to be a rocket scientist?
- *5. How do you feel about Homer standing up to his father and saying he won't go back into the mines — that instead he's going to go to space? Explain your answer.

Student/Counselor Role Play Statement Cards

Statement #1

College costs too much and isn't worth it.

Statement #2

You have to be really smart to go to college.

To Go or Not to Go Prompts & Follow-Up Questions

PROMPT 1:

True or false: There are plenty of good jobs you can get without going to college, so there's really no reason to go.

FOLLOW-UP:

Give some examples of good jobs available with and without college.

PROMPT 2:

True or false: Although college can be really expensive, it's a good investment in your future.

FOLLOW-UP:

What if you can't afford it?

PROMPT 3:

True or false: Once you've screwed up in high school, there's no chance of getting into college or succeeding while you're there.

FOLLOW-UP:

Why is studying hard in high school an advantage? Is there a way to recover if you don't?

PROMPT 4:

True or false: There are lots of advantages of going to college that outweigh whatever feels uncomfortable or risky about going.

FOLLOW-UP:

What are the risks? Are there any advantages that aren't about money?

To Go or Not to Go Research Questions

Reason to go to college:

What career advantages does college offer?

Reason to go to college:

Discuss the long-term financial advantages of going to college.

Reason to go to college:

What financial aid options are available for kids who can't afford college?

Reason to go to college:

How can kids who've gotten off to a bad academic start in high school improve their chances of college success?

Reason to go to college:

Does college offer advantages that aren't about how much money you make?

Reason not to go to college:

List three or more jobs that pay well that you can get without a college degree.

Reason not to go to college:

Discuss the high cost of going to college.

Reason not to go to college:

What happens if you're not academically prepared?

Reason not to go to college:

Discuss alternatives for people who aren't "into" school.

Reason not to go to college:

Does enrolling in college require a student to take a risk? Explain.
