Make College Happen
tips for students grades 4–6

College may seem far away, but the future comes at you fast. Here are a few things to think and talk about with your friends and family members about planning for college.

**Dream BIG, but get REAL**

It’s fun to dream about all the cool things you can do with a college education. You can study the rain forest. Look for a cure for cancer. Start your own business. Make good money. But make sure you get the facts about what it takes to go to college.

- Think about what interests you and what you’d like to do when you graduate.
- How much education will you need for your chosen job?
- What will you earn with that degree?
- Do you know people who have that job? Ask them what it’s like or—better yet—ask if you can go to work with them for a day (some workplaces have a “Take a Child to Work” program).
- Get to know your school or community librarian. He or she can guide you to career-planning resources.

**SHARPEN your SKILLS**

You know all the habits your teachers and parents are always hammering into you: turn your homework in on time, turn off the TV, music and your cellphone when you study, limit your video gaming, write neatly…. Well, they’re right. If you want to get ahead, you have to practice and play by the rules. Learning good study skills will serve you well in high school and in college and may lead to more money to help you pay for college.

**LOOK for a college COACH**

It’s always good to talk to your parents about your plans for college, but there may be other people you know—a teacher, school counselor, relative, family friend—who also can give you advice about college. Find someone who can offer you guidance about your future and help you with the many steps you’ll need to take to get to your goal: a college education.

**Get COOL with SCHOOL**

You know you need to do well in school, but what else is important for getting into college?

- Take the right courses. Talk to your teachers and school counselors about what those courses are.
- Take Algebra I in 7th or 8th grade, BEFORE you get to high school. Taking challenging math courses in your middle school years sets you up for the right math and science in high school and college. And those math skills will prepare you for whatever courses you might need in college to pursue your dreams.