



# On Track to Career Success: High School Milestones for Postsecondary Success

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SCHOOL *of* EDUCATION

# HIGH SCHOOL MILESTONES FOR POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

During the 2020-2021 school year, the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University, along with a group of high school teachers from across the nation, co-developed a draft set of 9th-12th grade college and career readiness milestones. The milestones consist of evidence-based, grade by grade (9-12), academic and school success experiences, life skills, motivating interpersonal relationships, and postsecondary preparations. Reaching each grade's milestones increases the likelihood of students making informed decisions about their postsecondary plans as well as being prepared to succeed in their chosen pathways. Distributing the milestones across grades 9-12 engages the whole school in the vital work of putting all students on a pathway to adult success.



Students collaborating at a Grants Cibola County School

As partnerships with individual schools emerged, it became evident that collaboratively developing tailored milestones was essential to reflect each school's unique context and community. The language of the milestones needed to be nimble and adaptable to mirror the school's realities, and in some cases, the grade-level placement required modification based on the availability of college and career experiences. This co-creation process empowers both students and educators through active participation to claim the milestones as their own.

Students who reach these milestones are prone to stay on track for long-term career success. The milestones highlight the comprehensive journey from high school to adult success, encompassing academic, school success, and life skills, motivating relationships with supportive adults, and intentional preparation for life beyond graduation.

When the national milestones are customized to local conditions, they can also be used as grade-by-grade stepping stones to achieve the skills and attributes that make up a school's or district's portrait or profile of a graduate. While the profile of a graduate —also known as the graduate profile, portrait of a graduate, vision of a graduate, or learner portrait — identifies the outcomes the school, its students, and community seek for a high school graduate, the college- and career-ready milestones can be used to build the grade-by-grade steps to get there.

## NATIONAL 9TH GRADE MILESTONES

### Academic and School Success Experiences

- Students learn how to set goals and work toward them.
- Students experience early success in academic classes.
- Students showcase work habits and present/share/publish the work they are most proud of (connecting them to creating a portfolio).
- Students engage in prosocial and career-connected learning activities that show the relevance of schoolwork and provide opportunities to develop problem-solving and communication skills.
- Students articulate the expectations for high school graduation, self-assess where they are in relation to those, and reflect on opportunities for growth and learning.

### Motivational Experiences and Life Skills

- Students experience an initial welcome to high school (academy/bootcamp/exploration) that ensures as 9th grade student they feel successful; meet administrators, teachers, and other students; tour the school; learn about a typical schedule; and so on.
- Students engage in quarterly conversations with a caring adult who guides them in self-reflection on their path to and through graduation.
- Students connect with peers to process the high school experience, reflect, help each other, and build community.
- Students begin development of key life competencies: self-advocacy and reflection, resiliency, conflict resolution, and time and well-being management.

### Postsecondary Preparation

- Students understand the importance of doing well in their studies and how their courses lead to postsecondary success.
- Students identify their own interests and skills, and how these relate to their life goals, potential high school and college courses, and career interests.
- Students engage in one college and one career exposure activity outside of school.

## NATIONAL 10TH/11TH GRADE MILESTONES

### Academic and School Success Experiences

- The school provides students with courses aligned with current and emerging college, career, and life goals.
- The school ensures students have the opportunity to take higher level classes with the support needed each year throughout high school.
- Students construct a growing portfolio documenting academic, career-related, and personal work and growth.
- Students participate in at least one “extra” activity to allow for novel experiences and learning, i.e., a service learning or work-based learning project.
- Students share with the school community extracurricular knowledge or skills that they have developed, e.g., TED talks, short how-to videos, etc.
- Students co-create their own 10th/11th grade milestones.

### Motivational Experiences and Life Skills

- Students participate in quarterly conversations with a caring adult who guides them in self-reflection on their path to and through graduation to postsecondary pathways.
- Students have a peer or near peer mentor, tutor, and postsecondary support when needed.
- Students have conversations with recent alumni.

All of the following can be built into advisory, electives, service projects, work-based learning, experiential learning, self-learning quests, passion projects, after-school jobs, and more.

- Students have opportunities to acquire financial literacy.
- Students have opportunities to acquire a practical life skill, e.g., first aid, swimming, car repair, mentoring, tutoring, and so on.
- Students can unpack, reflect, and think forward about an experience at which they failed.
- Students can reflect on and articulate strategies to employ when anxious, stressed, or overwhelmed, and when they fall short, fail, or experience a setback.

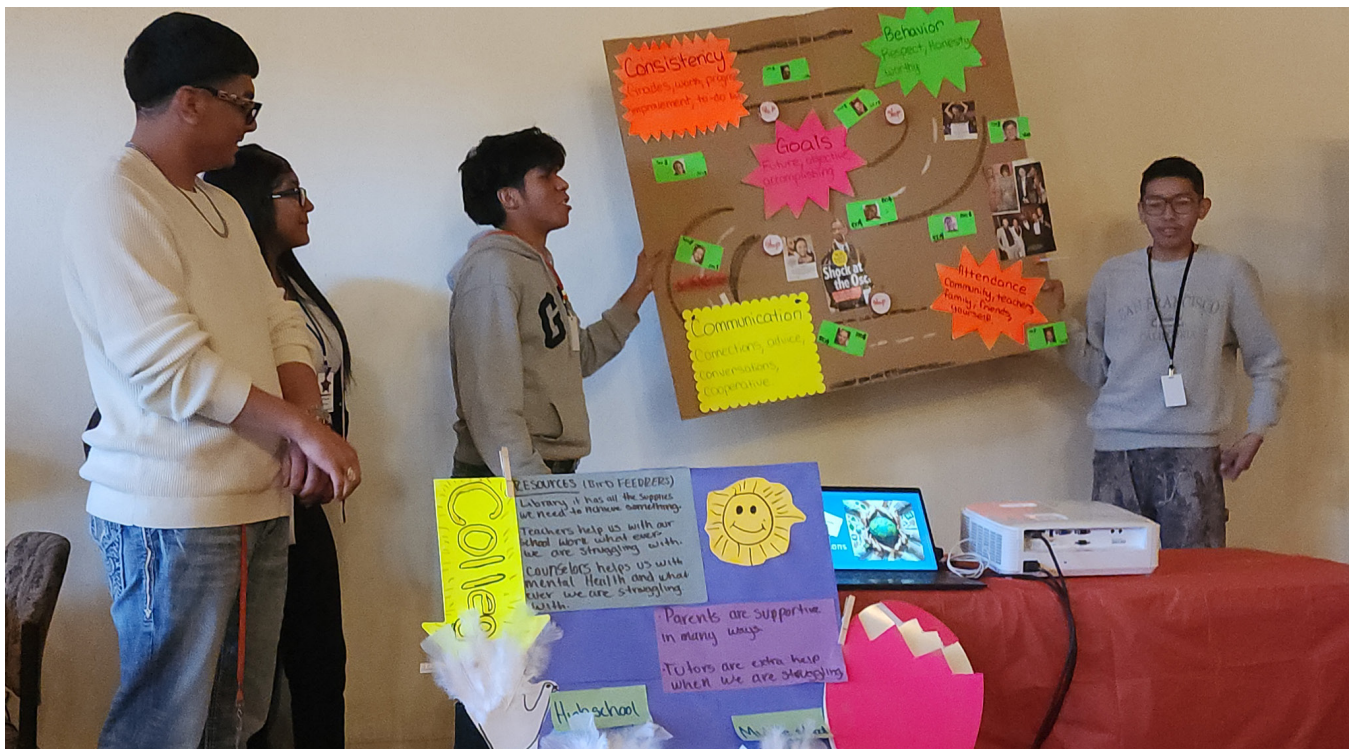
## NATIONAL 10TH/11TH GRADE MILESTONES, CONT.

### Postsecondary Preparation

The school provides opportunities for structured conversations with students and their families about future plans, identifying information sought/needed to make informed decisions. Students explore and investigate career opportunities, utilize local resources to research tentative career goals, and develop the ability to explain a pathway to their desired career(s).

Over the course of 10th and 11th grade students should have:

- Two or more career experiences (e.g., a job, job shadowing, externship/internship, work-based learning, finding a mentor in a field of interest).
- Multiple college experiences, e.g., college fairs, college visits, guest graduate speakers sharing with students what worked and didn't in postsecondary education.
- If possible, a summer or intersession experience on a campus or regional technical center, ideally with a stipend for completion.



## NATIONAL 12TH GRADE MILESTONES

### Academic and School Success Experiences

- Students have opportunities to present/showcase their work to their families, friends, and the community, and to practice public presentation skills in an authentic setting.
- Students take a college course in high school (e.g., AP, dual enrollment, etc.) or earn an industry certification.

### Motivational Experiences and Life Skills

- The school provides move-up ceremonies between grades, with the change from grades 11 to 12 being especially meaningful.
- Students have quarterly conversations with a caring adult who guides the student in self-reflection on their path to and through graduation to postsecondary pathways.
- Students have a peer/near peer mentor, tutor, and other postsecondary support when needed.

The following can be built into advisory, electives, service projects, work-based learning, experiential learning, self-learning quests, passion projects, after-school jobs, and more.

- Students develop practical communication skills (how to write professional texts and emails and how to advocate for themselves) and life/work competencies (how to make informed decisions, manage multiple priorities, and navigate diverse settings/people).

### Postsecondary Preparation

- Students complete a portfolio documenting academic, career-related, and personal work and growth in high school and its relation to future success and the post-secondary pathway they have chosen.
- Students in the early part of their senior year complete a senior year plan that has a timeline of key events/tasks required during senior year and summer to be on a postsecondary pathway the following fall.
- Students and their families complete the FAFSA.
- Students complete all necessary applications or paperwork for their chosen postsecondary pathway, e.g., college, career training, the military, and so on.

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