

Lesson Plan Outline for Viewing “School Shopping Tips”

Introduction

This outline represents a format for presenting the U.S. Department of Education’s (ED’s) video, “School Shopping Tips.” ED hopes that showing the video will encourage counselor/student interaction and start students and parents talking about choosing a postsecondary institution. We suggest that counselors use the breaks in the video and the time after viewing it to hold five-minute discussions on topics selected from among those suggested on the following pages.

It is important that counselors tell students about local aspects of approaches suggested in the video. Some high schools might have several computerized school-search databases; some high schools might have none. Likewise, while students in some areas of the country might find ten schools they want to visit within a one-hour drive, students in other areas might need to allow two or three days to visit just one school. Counselors will want to encourage all students to comparison shop before making a school decision. They also might want to point out concerns they have about students choosing a particular school.

I. Introducing the Video

- A. Discuss the advantages for those who complete some type of postsecondary education, for example:
 - 1. more job opportunities,
 - 2. higher income, and
 - 3. better quality of life.
- B. Explain that choosing a postsecondary institution is a complex and often daunting process because it requires families to consider a broad range of variables. Students need to:
 - 1. identify their academic and/or occupational interests,

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2. decide on the level of education that is appropriate for them,
 3. select the institutional and student-body characteristics they find of greatest importance,
 4. consider the cost and availability of financial assistance,
 5. establish priorities when the variables conflict, and
 6. find a quality institution that meets their needs.
- C. Explain that the video is designed to introduce viewers to critical variables in the school-selection process, identify resources available to help students make good choices, and suggest a course of action that can increase chances students will be happy with the schools they select.
- personal inventory, students should be able to answer questions such as:
1. Do I prefer working indoors or out of doors?
 2. Do I prefer using my head, my hands, or both to get a job done?
 3. Would I prefer working with people, numbers, or things?
 4. Do I love school, tolerate it, or hate it?
 5. Which school subjects do I like the most? Which would I most like to avoid?
 6. What are my strongest academic skills? What are my weakest?
 7. Are there academic subjects that I want to learn more about?

II. First Discussion Break: Self-Knowledge

Students know more about themselves than anyone else knows about them. During this first break, counselors should review ways in which students can increase that self-knowledge and use what they know in the school-shopping process.

- A. Inform students about standardized personality and interest inventories, opportunities for taking them, and how the results of the inventories can help in the school-selection process.
- B. Elaborate on the concept of students creating personal inventories and review the variables to be considered in such an inventory. For example, after completing a

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8. Do I have any well-developed, non-academic skills, abilities, or areas of knowledge?
 9. Are there non-academic subjects that I want to learn more about?
 10. Will my family be able to pay my school expenses or will I need financial assistance?
- C. Encourage students to consult with their school counselors. Identify other “expert” help in the community and encourage students to seek out help from these local experts as well.
- books, personal expenses, transportation, and so on.
- C. Let students know that help with college expenses is available from a variety of sources. Counselors also can tell students how to find out more information about financial aid.
- D. Explain that a school’s default rate is the percentage of students who attend a school, take out federal student loans, and later fail to repay them. Tell students to ask schools about their loan default rates.

III. Second Discussion Break: Financial Issues

- A. Begin by letting students know that each year the U.S. Department of Education gives or lends students several **billion** dollars to help them attend college. So, students shouldn’t let the cost of attending school limit their goals and aspirations. All of them will be able to find a school they can afford and that meets their needs. The wide variety of educational institutions and the availability of federal student assistance funds places postsecondary education within reach of everyone. Emphasize that by starting to shop early and asking the questions on the “School Shopping List” (Attachment 6C), students can ensure the widest range of choices.

- B. Inform students that a school’s “cost of attendance” includes more than the tuition amount. In addition to tuition, it includes room and board,

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Inform students that at schools having high default rates, there may be some restrictions on their borrowing under the federal student loan programs. In addition, a default rate above 20 percent

might indicate that a school’s former students are unable to find employment or are employed at salaries that do not permit them to make the required payments on their student loans.

- E. Explore the relationship between a program’s cost, the expected income of graduates, the debt burden students are likely to have after completing the program, and the expected monthly payments for that level of indebtedness.

Warn students that although borrowing under different loan programs can increase the funds students have to meet educational expenses, it also can result in having to make multiple payments once their enrollment drops below half time. The combined payments might be more than they can afford on a career field’s entry-level wages.

- F. Inform students that once they begin classes, if they drop out, they won’t get all of their money back. Emphasize that a school is required to provide a written statement explaining its refund policies and procedures to prospective students before they enroll or before they execute an enrollment agreement (or other document that legally binds a student to pay the school). Since most of them will be first-time students, point out that if first-time students leave school before completing 60 percent of their first enrollment period, the school will calculate their possible refund amount by as many as three different methods. Their refund will be the largest amount calculated.

Tell students to keep in mind that if they receive federal student aid (except for Federal Work-Study) and a refund is made, some or all of that money will be returned directly to the aid programs or to the lender for their loans.

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IV. Concluding Discussion

- A. Explain to students that there are a variety of jobs within a career field. Inform them that often different jobs within a field require different levels of education.

For example, in the medical field, students can train in one year, at a reputable private career school, to begin work as a dental hygienist. A student who completes two years of training at a community college can find employment as a medical technologist. In three years,

a student can train to be an registered nurse; in five, a physical therapist, and so on. Even students with very limited financial resources or who aren't at the top of their class can train to work in career fields that interest them.

- B. Explain to students that the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act is designed to make prospective students aware of a postsecondary school's commitment to provide equitable opportunities to its male and female athletes. Inform students that coeducational institutions that participate in the federal student assistance programs and have intercollegiate athletic programs are required to disclose information about their relative support for their men's and women's athletic programs. Encourage student-athletes to request this information and review it with their parents, counselors, and coaches.
- C. Inform students that institutions are required to provide information about their campus safety policies and procedures, as well as disclose statistics on certain crimes that take place on campus. Encourage students to request these reports from schools they are considering and review them with their parents and counselors.
- D. Inform students that the key to school shopping success is planning ahead and starting shopping early.
- E. Explain the National Response Date. Emphasize that it is the responsibility of students and their parents to keep track of deadlines for submitting applications and

supporting documents to admissions and financial aid offices.

- F. Emphasize that students should not sign any documents during their first visit to a school or while a recruiter is visiting their home. Students need to gather information on several schools and compare the schools before making a decision. Let students know that the more information they gather, the more likely it is that they'll make a decision that's right for them.
- G. Remind students to keep their eyes, ears, and options open and to shop around.
- H. Distribute copies of the “School Shopping Tips for Students” and the “School Shopping List.” (See Attachments 6B and 6C in Session 6 of the High School Counselor's Trainee Guide.)

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