

Lesson One: Higher Education Options



Lesson Overview

This lesson will provide students with an overview of the course objectives and what is contained in their *My Path to Success* Student Handbook. After the introduction, this lesson is designed to make students aware of the variety of postsecondary educational opportunities that are available to them. They will explore the different kinds of institutions that offer postsecondary education, as well as the degrees offered and the time required to complete them. They will learn why furthering their education beyond high school can benefit them economically, and begin linking their career choices with degree and certification requirements.

Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- identify the different types of postsecondary institutions that exist in the United States.
- explain the hierarchy of degrees available at U.S. postsecondary institutions.
- describe the economic benefits of furthering their education beyond high school.
- locate information on the degrees required for specific careers.

Vocabulary

- associate degree
- bachelor's degree
- certification
- community college
- doctoral degree
- four-year college/university
- license
- major
- master's degree
- postsecondary education
- salary
- vocational school

Required Materials

- Signs representing different degrees
- Copies of the *My Path to Success* Student Handbook for each student
- Camera (see users note on page 31)



Suggestion: Lesson One is a great lesson to have one of your college/university partners talk with students about postsecondary education opportunities.

Optional Materials

- KWL transparency, overhead projector, and marker (see pages 23–24)
- College sweatshirts and/or t-shirts
- Cap and gown
- Computers with Internet access
- Laptop and LCD projector (if using the PowerPoint)

Supplemental Activities

- College Research (page 2 of the Supplemental Activities Guide)
- Local Colleges and Universities (page 4 of the Supplemental Activities Guide)
- Taking College to the Bank (page 7 of the Supplemental Activities Guide)

Resources

- Family Information Sheet (pages 38–40)
- My Future My Way
<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/sites/default/files/my-future-my-way.pdf>
- You Can Go!
<http://youcango.collegeboard.org>
- College: What It's All About & Why It Matters
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/know-yourself/college-what-its-all-about-and-why-it-matters>
- Why Go To College? From the University of North Texas
<http://howtochoose.unt.edu/how-to-choose>
- 7 Excuses Not to Go to College...And Why They're Lame
<http://www.routetocollege.com/College-Planning/7-LAME-Excuses/index.html>
- Getting Ready for College Early
<http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/GettingReadyCollegeEarly>
- The Value of a College Degree — from ERIC Digest
<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED470038.pdf>
- What It's Worth: Field of Training and Economic Status in 2009
<http://census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p70-129.pdf>
- Digest of Education Statistics 2014 (Chapter 5, Outcomes of Education)
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/ch_5.asp

Before the Lesson Checklist

- Throughout the class, take a picture of each student.** You may begin taking pictures as soon as students arrive. These pictures will be added to the “I’m Going to College!” worksheet students will complete during the lesson. **Coordinators:** Solicit the donation of a t-shirt or sweatshirt from the local college that students can wear in their picture. If you are unable to acquire a t-shirt, bring a cap and gown for students to wear as they pose for their picture.
- Create an “I’m Going to College!” bulletin board.** This board should have room for students to hang their “I’m Going to College!” pages, as well as information about local colleges such as pennants, posters, pictures, and brochures. It will remain up for the entirety of the program.
- Create enough copies of the *My Path to Success Student Handbook*** to give to each participant.
- If you have an overhead transparency projector, **create a KWL transparency** (see page 24).
- Hang signs for the “What Degree Do You Need?” activity** along the front or back wall of the classroom. On the far end of the room, hang a sign that says “High School Diploma.” On the other end of the room, hang a sign that says “Doctoral Degree.” Spaced equally in between, post signs that say “Vocational Certificate,” “Associate Degree,” “Bachelor’s Degree,” and “Master’s Degree.” (See the chart on page 37.)

Lesson One Timeline — Overall lesson time: One hour



Activity	Summary	Detailed Info.	Rationale
Introduction to the course and the <i>My Path to Success</i> Student Handbook (10 minutes)	Teachers will provide background information for the Kids2College Program and the <i>My Path to Success</i> Student Handbook.	Teacher's Edition: page 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide students with the purpose of the course and the goals they will accomplish during their participation in the program.
Opening Journal (5 minutes)	Students will complete a KWL chart identifying five things they already know and five things they would like to know.	Teacher's Edition: pages 23–28 Student Handbook: page 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gauge student background knowledge and discover what they want to learn.
Different Ways to Continue Your Education After High School (10 minutes)	Teachers will discuss different types of postsecondary schools and the degrees that they offer. Include the following terms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vocational school community college four-year college or university certificate associate degree bachelor's degree master's degree doctoral degree license 	Teacher's Edition: pages 25–28 Student Handbook: Students can follow along with the lesson on page 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To expand or enhance students' knowledge of the different options available for continuing their education. To set the context for exploring the educational path they need to take for their career.
What Degree Do You Need? (15 minutes)	Teachers will lead students in a physical activity that allows them to learn more about the different degrees required to work in certain careers. (<i>Modification: Q&A or writing activity</i>)	Teacher's Edition: instructions, pages 29–30; sample room layout, page 37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help students make the connection between continued education and career goals.
I'm Going to College! (5 minutes)	Teachers will take pictures of the students throughout the lesson. Students will complete a worksheet about their college and career goals. Student pictures will be added to these pages and they will be hung around the room. (<i>Modification: Essay; Photoshop students at favorite campus; Photo w/Diploma</i>)	Teacher's Edition: pages 31–32 Student Handbook: page 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help students visualize themselves as college graduates and successful professionals. To serve as a reminder to students that their future includes postsecondary education.
Taking College to the Bank (10 minutes)	Students will complete two graphs depicting the economic benefits of postsecondary education, then the teacher will lead the class in a group discussion about them.	<i>Please note that this is a customizable activity.</i> Teacher's Edition: pages 33–35 Student Handbook: pages 7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To illustrate how postsecondary education impacts students' financial futures. To link education to the achievement of future career goals.
Closing Journal (5 minutes)	Students will take 5 minutes to write in their Student Handbook.	Teacher's Edition: page 36 Student Handbook: page 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To get students to begin thinking about their future. To prepare students for the next lesson.

Welcome

Teacher Instructions: Set the context of the Kids2College Program by welcoming students and congratulating them on taking the first step towards their future.

During our time together, we are going to learn many things about ourselves, our future, and how we can achieve our goals. We will talk about what each of you wants to accomplish after finishing high school and the steps you need to take to get to where you want to be in life. All of you should know that no dream is too big for us while we are together! I encourage you to dream big. This is your chance to learn about how to get on the path to your future.

During this class, we will learn about the following:

- How continuing your education can put you on the path to success
- How your interests, talents, and skills can be turned into a career
- Steps you can take now to make sure you are ready for college
- Programs that are available to support your college goals

As we learn more about careers, education, and our futures, each of you will select a career to focus on and learn more about how education can help you achieve your goals. We'll be recording what we learn and reflecting on our goals in your *My Path to Success* Student Handbook. This handbook will contain all of the work we do during the course. During each lesson, we will add information to the handbook as we learn more about the steps you need to take to reach your educational and career goals. This information will help you prepare for your final project, when you'll be presenting to the class and telling all of us how you plan to achieve your goals during the final class.

All of our hard work will be rewarded in the end when we get the chance to visit a college campus. During our college visit, you'll have a chance to meet with college students and learn about how they are pursuing their career goals as well.

Teacher Instructions: As you are describing the My Path to Success Student Handbook, give each student their copy.

Let's get started!

Opening Journal: KWL

What You Know, What You Want to Know, and What You've Learned

At the beginning and end of each lesson, we are going to take a moment to write a journal entry in our Student Handbook. This is a time for you to think about what you've learned, to identify goals for the future, and to record any questions you might have. For today's opening journal, we will complete a KWL chart so that we can start thinking about what we already know about college, how to get there, and why it's important. A KWL chart is a graphic organizer that is used to understand what you have learned from your previous experiences and important ideas that you want to explore. Do you know what a graphic organizer is? A graphic organizer is visual way to organize information. At the end of the program, we will revisit this chart and reflect on all the things we have learned together.

Turn to page 4 in your Student Handbook. In the first column, make a list of five things you know about college. Write down information you have learned from your teachers or people in your community. You may even have a relative who has been to college. You can write about things you have learned from their experiences. Don't worry if you can't think of five things. Just write as many things as you can think of.

In the second column, you will write five questions you would like to ask someone about college. For now, leave the third column blank. We will complete that during our final lesson.

Teacher Instructions: If your students are having difficulty thinking of items to write, ask the following prompting questions:

- Do you know anyone who went to college? What have they told you about it?
- What do you know about the local college or university?
- Do you want to go to college?
- What have you heard college is like?

After students have completed both columns, ask them to volunteer to tell that class the items and questions that they wrote on their chart. You should record students' responses on the transparency. The master for this transparency can be found on page 24.



If you do not have an overhead projector and/or the ability to make transparencies, you may create a KWL chart on the chalkboard or whiteboard. Be sure to transcribe the information you gather from this exercise onto a sheet of paper so that you may reference it throughout the program.

This exercise will also serve as an informal assessment so that you can gauge students' background knowledge and interests and find supplemental resources for the students. If you find that there are some things that students want to learn that are not included in the curriculum, speak with your Kid-s2College Coordinator about ways you can supplement the curriculum.

KWL Chart

What I know...	What I want to know...	What I have learned...

Different Ways to Continue Your Education After High School

Teacher Instructions: Whenever the lessons call for an in-class discussion, feel free to add your own questions on the topic and ask follow-up questions based on the direction of the discussion. The questions provided are designed to get the conversation started, but we hope that your rich experience will help you generate additional questions based on the flow of discussion.

- Q:** Now we know a little more about what each of you knows about college, and what you would like to know. Let's think a little further into the future.
- Q:** How many of you have thought about what your life will be like as an adult?
- Q:** Where do you want to live when you're an adult?
- Q:** What kinds of things will you have? (*for example, cars, electronics, furniture, etc.*)
- Q:** What kind of job would you like when you are an adult?
- Q:** Do you think you are going to continue your education after high school? What kind of education will you pursue?
- Q:** Where do you see yourself in the future and what steps will you take to get there?

Today we are going to focus on the different types of educational options that are available for you after high school. We'll talk about some of the different jobs that these schools can prepare you for. Education after high school is known as **postsecondary education**.

Different Kinds of Schools

Students can follow along and take notes on page 5 in their *My Path to Success* Student Handbook.

There are many different ways to continue your education after high school. Here in the United States, there are three main types of schools that you can go to:

- vocational school
- community college
- four-year college or university

- Q:** What are the differences between these types of schools?

Teacher Tip: As you are explaining the different types of institutions, let students know which local schools fit into that category.

A **vocational school** is a school where you learn specific trades. What kind of careers do you think they teach you about at vocational schools?

Possible answers: hairstylist, beautician, mechanic, plumber, electrician, computer technician, etc.

Vocational Programs

Vocational or trade schools teach skills specific to a job. They are not focused on general education classes, like English or history. Most of the jobs you can learn about at vocational schools are very hands-on. If you were interested in cosmetology, culinary arts, mechanics, or technology-related fields, you might attend a vocational school. If you graduate from a vocational school, you usually receive a certificate that shows employers you have completed a vocational program.

Q: Do you know anyone who has gone to vocational school?

Q: What was their experience like? What did they learn?

Q: Where do they work now?

Teacher Instructions: While we recognize that vocational school is an important option for some of our students and that many careers that require a vocational education are extremely valuable to our communities, the goal of the Kids2College curriculum is to encourage students to aim to achieve a college education. If you have a student who is interested in a vocational track career, share examples of how a college degree can help expand that career. For example:

- A business degree paired with an auto mechanic’s certificate would provide an individual with the knowledge and skills to open their own garage instead of working for someone else.
- An individual who completes a vocational nurse training program earns significantly less than a nurse who completed a bachelor’s degree in nursing — an almost \$20,000 a year difference! In addition, according to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, “RNs with at least a bachelor’s degree will have better job prospects than those without a bachelor’s.”

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor and Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-07 Edition

College or University Programs

When most people think of going to school after high school graduation, they think of college. Students who go to college work towards completing a **degree**. A degree signifies that a student has met the requirements necessary to complete their program of study. Postsecondary education degrees can be earned in one of two different types of schools:



- **Community college** is a two-year school. You can earn an associate degree at community college. You can also take classes that may transfer to a four-year college or university.
- A **four-year college or university** is a school where students work towards earning a bachelor's degree. You'll see that some four-year schools are referred to as 'colleges' and others are 'universities'. There isn't too much difference between the two. Usually, colleges are smaller than universities, and sometimes offer fewer degrees. You also may earn a master's or doctoral degree from a four-year college or university.

Q: Do you know anyone who attended a community college? Do you know anyone who went to a college or university?

Q: Where did they go to school?

Q: What degree did they earn? What was their field of study?

Q: How has their degree helped them in their career?

Teacher Tip: If you have extra time and would like to share more information about local or state postsecondary institutions, see the "Local Colleges and Universities" activity on page 4 of the Supplemental Activities Guide.

Academic Degrees

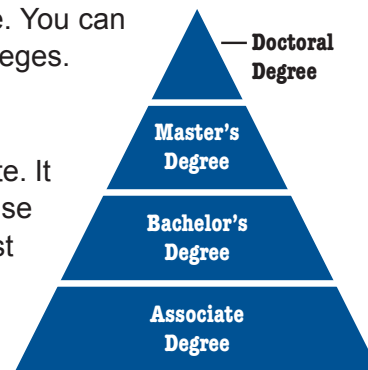
Now that you know about the kinds of schools you can attend, let's talk about the types of degrees you can earn. College degrees are divided into different categories depending on the number of years you study and how much you focus on certain topics. This chart shows how the different degrees relate to each other:

Associate Degree

You usually earn an **associate degree** after two years of studying full time. You can earn an associate degree at a community college or at some four-year colleges.

Bachelor's Degree

A **bachelor's degree** takes about four years of studying full time to complete. It is required for many jobs and for getting a **license** in certain fields. A license is a document that shows a person is allowed to work in a certain field. Most licenses require you to take a test and meet other standards. For example, teachers have to graduate from a specific program and pass tests in order to achieve their teaching license.



Master's Degree

A **master's degree** is awarded to students who continue going to school after they finish their bachelor's degree. It usually takes between one and three years to complete a master's degree.

Doctoral Degree

A **doctoral degree** is the most advanced degree. It usually takes between three and seven years to complete a doctoral degree. If you want to earn a doctoral degree, you need to earn a bachelor's degree first. Once you finish a doctoral degree, you are considered an expert in the subject you earned your degree in.

Teacher Tip: As you talk about the different types of degrees available, share your personal college experience with students, including which degrees you have earned and which institutions you have attended.

Extra Information: *While it is not required that you discuss this information in class, students may have questions regarding what they can study when they continue on to postsecondary education. If possible, incorporate the following discussion about college majors. If you have extra time, you may wish to have students complete the “College Research” activity found on page 2 of the Supplemental Activities Guide.*

Every college student must eventually choose a **major**. Your major is the focus of your studies while you are in college. It is usually a specific academic subject (for example, English, physics, or anthropology) or a specific professional field (for example, secondary education, engineering, or business).

Because you will take many different classes in your major, it is important to see what kind of major you will need to work in the career you've chosen. This will give you a better picture of the kinds of subjects you will be studying if this is the career path you decide to take.

Activity: What Degree Do You Need?

Now that we understand more about the kinds of schools you can go to and the kinds of degrees you can earn, let's see how much you can remember.

Teacher's Note: It is important to note that the majority of students will not know the correct answers regarding what kind of degree is required for specific careers. That is not the intention of this exercise. Instead, this is an opportunity for students to test their existing knowledge and for you to raise their awareness of the educational requirements of careers that they may have considered. If students are right, celebrate the accomplishment — but if students are way off, take the opportunity to educate them about how education impacts career opportunities in the field you are discussing.

Teacher Instructions: Have students push their desks and chairs against the walls to clear a large space in the center of the room. As mentioned in the pre-class checklist, you should have hung your signs around the room. Make sure all signs are along either the back or front wall. On the far end of the room, hang a sign that says “High School Diploma.” On the other end of the room, hang a sign that says “Doctoral Degree.” Spaced equally in between, post signs that say “Vocational Certificate,” “Associate Degree,” “Bachelor’s Degree,” and “Master’s Degree.” Have students start by standing in a single file line in front of the “High School Diploma” sign. Instruct the students that you will be calling out a series of jobs. Without speaking to one another, they must decide what degree is required for that job and go stand in front of it. You may want to model an example for them so that they see how the game works.

After you call out a career and the students stand in the location they think is correct, select a student and ask the following questions. Remember to feel free to ask additional follow-up questions as the discussion continues:

- Q:** Why did you choose the degree that you did?
- Q:** How many years does that degree take?
- Q:** What kind of school do you attend to earn that degree?

There are some careers where there is more than one correct answer (for example, nurses can earn certification after an associate degree or bachelor’s degree, and may also continue their education beyond a bachelor’s to work in administration or be on a school’s nursing faculty). When you come across a career that has more than one educational option, ask the following questions:

- Q:** Are there any other degrees that a person with this career could earn?
- Q:** What is the difference between a person in this career with a (name lower degree) and a person who has a (name higher degree)?
 - Who do you think earns more money?
 - Who do you think has more responsibility?

The chart below provides information for a sampling of different careers you can call out and the degrees related to them. Feel free to add additional careers based on local industry and/or student interest. Time will only permit for you to go over a few careers, so you may wish to choose which ones you want to focus on ahead of time.

Profession	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Degree
Accountant		X	X	
Architect		X	X	
Athletic Trainer		X		
Attorney/Lawyer		X		X
Chemist		X	X	X
Computer Engineer		X	X	
Economist		X	X	X
Journalist		X	X	
Medical Doctor		X		X
Nurse	X	X		
Teacher		X	X	
Youth Coordinator	X	X		

After the activity is over, have students put their desks back in place and wrap up using the following questions. Feel free to add your own questions on the topic and ask follow-up questions based on the direction of the discussion.

- Q:** How many did you get right?
- Q:** Were there any answers that surprised you? Why?
- Q:** After doing this activity, do you feel like continuing your education beyond high school is a necessity to success in your career?
- Q:** Which degree do you think you are going to strive for?



Teacher Tip: If your classroom does not allow you to move furniture or you feel you have too many students to successfully complete this activity, you may modify it by asking for a few volunteers to do a smaller version in the front of the room. Students can move back in forth in front of the classroom without having to move chairs or desks.

I'm Going to College!

Now that we all have clear goals for the future, we're going to make sure that everyone knows it!

Teacher Instructions: Each student should complete the "I'm Going to College!" worksheet on page 6 of the Student Handbook (see next page). Throughout the class period, take pictures of each student. These pictures will then be attached to the worksheet and can be hung around the room as reminders to the students that they are headed to college and a successful career. Ideally, you can have the students wear a cap and gown or a sweatshirt or T-shirt from your local college to get them feeling like a college student. It does not matter what kind of camera you use to take students' pictures. If you do not own a camera and the school does not have one, purchase a disposable camera. Be sure you have enough exposures for all of your students — depending on the size of the class, you may need two.



Notes:

The worksheet is titled "I'm Going to College!" and features a blue header with the text "Kids2College: Fast Forward to My Future!". Below the title is a large rectangular box labeled "Student Picture Goes Here!". Underneath the box are four lines of text with blank space for answers: "Name:", "Age:", "Careers I'm interested in:", "College I want to go to:", and "What I want to study in college:". At the bottom right of the worksheet is the logo for "KIDS 2 COLLEGE THE SALLIE MAE FUND".

I'm Going to College!

(My Path to Success Student Handbook, page 6)

Student Picture Goes Here!

Name: _____

Age: _____

Careers I'm interested in: _____

College I want to go to: _____

What I want to study in college: _____

Taking College to the Bank

Now you know the different kinds of schools you can go to and the different types of degrees you can earn. But did you know that earning a college degree can also earn you more money?



College graduates can earn more money than people with only a high school diploma. Let's learn more about the financial value of going to college.

Teacher Instructions: Have students turn to the “Taking College to the Bank” worksheet in their Student Handbook (pages 7–8). Students will create bar graphs depicting the economic benefits of education.

Once students have completed the activity, take a moment to discuss their findings.

- Q:** Now that you have seen the economic benefits of education, what kind of degree do you think you would like to get?
- Q:** Is this different than what you thought before?
- Q:** How do you think continuing your education after high school can impact your future?

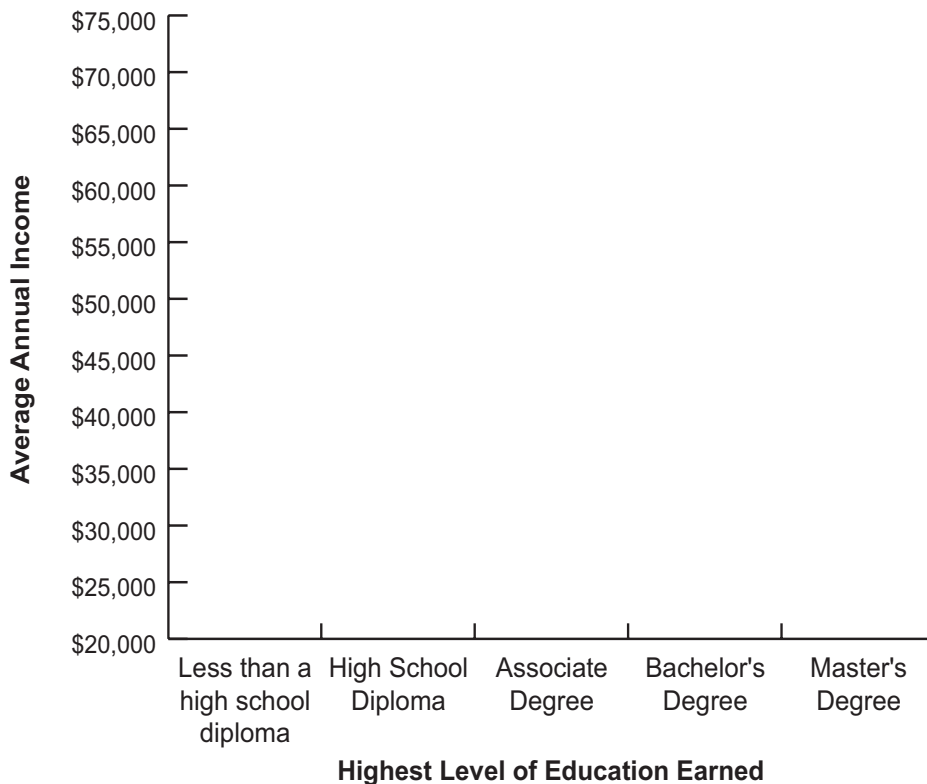
Teacher Tip: If you do not have enough time to have students complete the “Taking College to the Bank” graphing activity, we encourage you to still share this information with students. A handout with completed graphs can be found on page 8 of the Supplemental Activities Guide. If the students do not complete the graphs, please distribute this handout and discuss it instead.

Taking College to the Bank

Using the information shown below, create a bar graph that shows how much money the following people make on average. The X and Y axis have been labeled for you.

(*My Path to Success Student Handbook, page 7*)

Average Annual Adult Income – United States¹



Plot this data:

Less than a high school diploma — \$27,040

High School diploma — \$37,024

Associate degree — \$43,472

Bachelor's degree — \$60,996

Master's degree — \$72,852



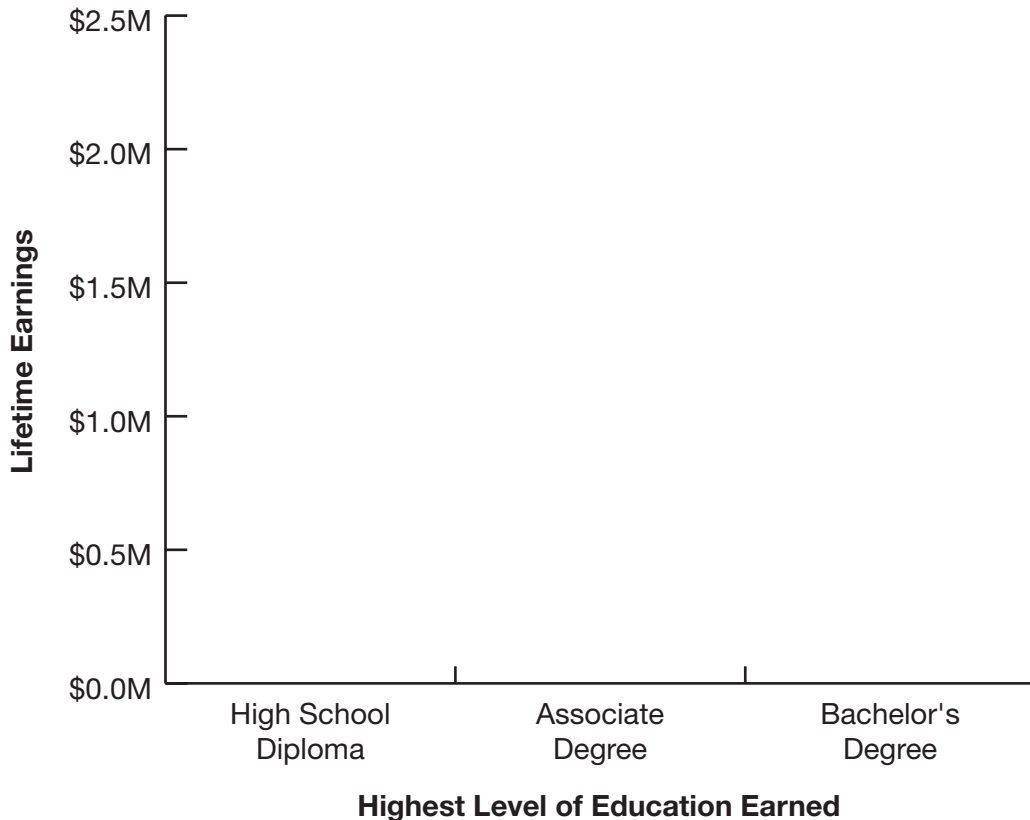
¹ Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017

Taking College to the Bank

Using the information shown below, create a bar graph that shows how much money the following people make on average. The X and Y axis have been labeled for you.

(My Path to Success Student Handbook, page 8)

Lifetime Earnings (in millions of dollars) – United States²



Plot this data:

High School Diploma — \$1.4 million

Associate degree — \$1.7 million

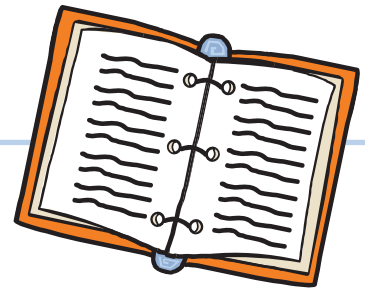
Bachelor's degree — \$2.4 million



² Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017 (averaged at 40 years each)

Closing Journal

(My Path to Success Student Handbook, page 9)



Teacher Instructions: Explain to students that at the conclusion of each lesson, they will have the chance to record some of their thoughts about their future in their Student Handbook.

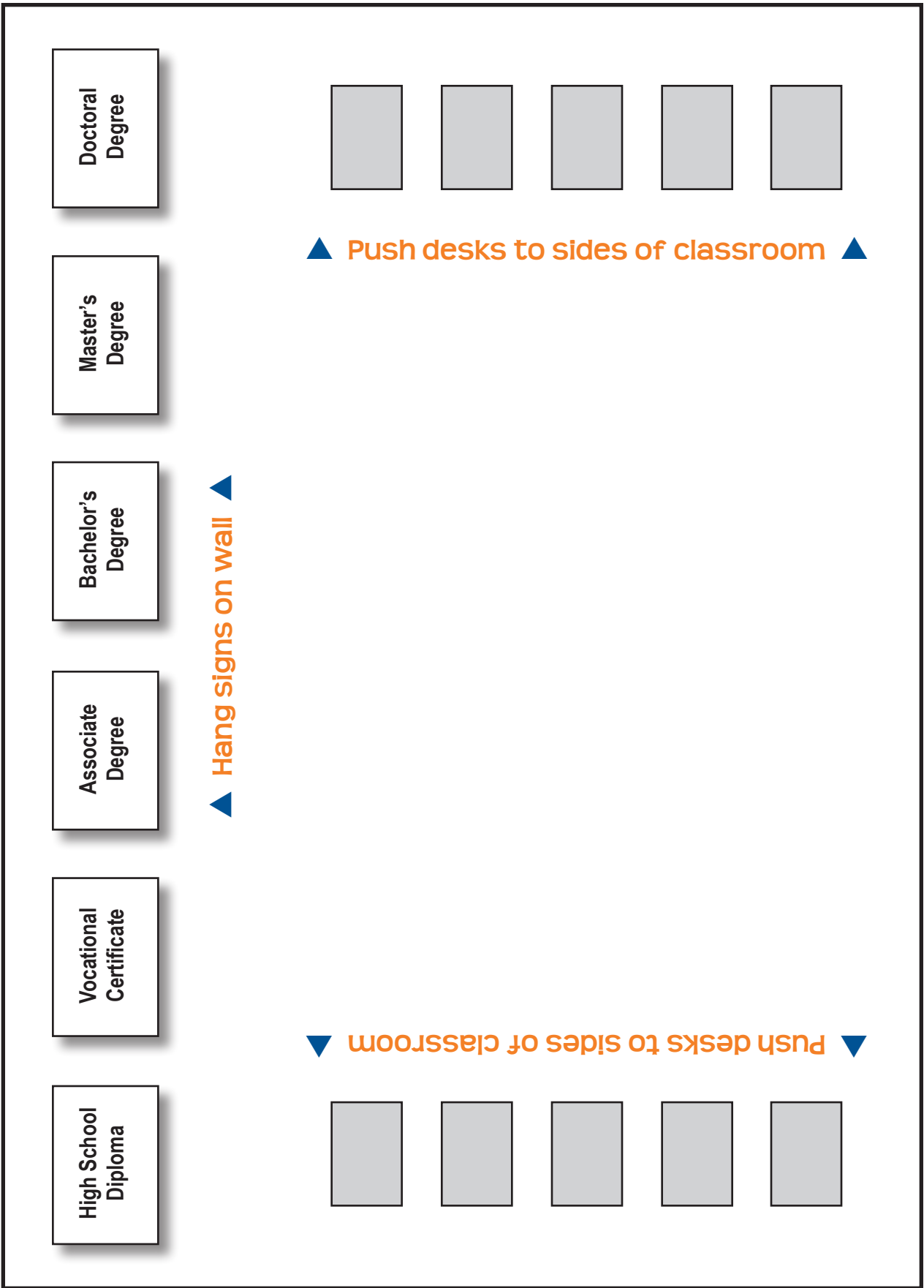
- Today we learned more about the different kinds of education you can get after you finish high school. Take a moment to look at what you wrote in the KWL chart that we did at the beginning of class. We'll be addressing these questions over the course of our time together. Were any of your questions answered today? Which ones?

- Did you think of any new questions after learning about college? What are they?

- What kind of degree do you want to obtain? What kind of school will you have to attend to earn that degree?

- How many years will that take you?

Room Set Up for “What Degree Do You Need?”





Family Information Sheet One: Higher Education Options

Dear Family Member,

As you know, your student has been selected to participate in an exciting program called **Kids2-College**. As a part of this program, they will learn about different education and career options and the steps they need to take to prepare themselves for college.

About this Course

During this class, your student will learn about the following:

- How a student's interests, talents, and skills can be turned into a career.
- How continuing education can put students on the path to success.
- What colleges consider when they admit students.
- Steps students can take now to make sure they are ready for college.
- Programs that can support your students' college goals.

After each lesson, we will be sending an information sheet home to you. This way you can learn more about what is being discussed in class. Each information sheet will include an activity that you and your student can do together. We encourage you to use these activities to talk with your student about what they are learning in the Kids2College course.

At the end of the program, students will have the chance to experience college first hand when we take them on a college visit. This exciting event will allow students to connect what they've learned about education and careers with an actual college experience.

Lesson One

During today's lesson, your student learned more about the different kinds of schools they can attend after high school and the different types of degrees these schools offer. Attached to this letter you will find a summary of the information they discussed during the lesson.

It is important for family members to understand the variety of college degrees available and the types of schools that offer them. This will help you and your student decide which educational path to take to achieve career goals.

Your student also participated in an activity that helped them to see the financial benefits to continuing their education beyond high school. Ask your student to share their completed charts with you and discuss what they found.

Thank you for helping your student as they work towards making the college dream a reality!

Sincerely,

The Kids2College Team

I'm Going to College!

Kids2College Family Information Sheet



Educational Options

There are many reasons that students should consider continuing their education beyond high school. It is important that

students and families understand their educational options in the United States, as well as the benefits of continuing education beyond high school in order to make informed decisions about their educational choices.

Vocational Programs

Vocational or Trade Schools teach skills specific to a job. They are not focused on general education. Most of the jobs you can learn about at vocational schools are very hands-on. If you were interested in cosmetology, culinary arts, mechanics, or technology-related fields, you might attend a vocational school. If you graduate from a vocational school, you usually receive a certificate that shows employers you have completed a vocational program.

Academic Programs

When most people think of going to school after high school graduation, they think of college. Students who go to college work towards completing a degree. A degree shows that a student has met the requirements necessary to complete their program of study. Higher education degrees can be earned in one of two different types of schools:

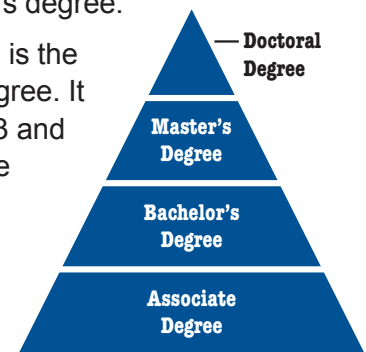
- **Community College** is a two-year school. You can earn an associate degree at community college. You can also take classes that may transfer to a four-year college or university.

- A **Four-year College or University** is a school where students work towards earning a bachelor's degree. Some four-year schools are called 'colleges' and others are 'universities'. There isn't too much difference between the two. Usually, colleges are smaller than universities, and sometimes offer fewer degrees. You also may earn a master's or doctoral degree from a four-year college or university.

What is an academic degree?

A **degree** shows that a student has met the requirements to complete a program of study.

- An **associate degree** usually requires two years of full-time study and can be earned at a community college. Associate degree programs usually are equal to the first two years of a bachelor's degree program.
- A **bachelor's degree** is an undergraduate degree that requires about four years of full-time study. It is required for some professions and for licensure in certain fields. It also is required for admission to advanced degree programs such as law and medicine.
- A **master's degree** is awarded to students who continue their education beyond a bachelor's degree. It usually takes 1–3 years to complete a master's degree.
- A **doctoral degree** is the most advanced degree. It can take between 3 and 7 years to complete a doctoral degree. A bachelor's degree and often a master's degree are required of students who want to earn a doctoral degree.



Going to College Can Pay Off

■ Better Employment Rates

Usually, the more education a person completes after high school, the more likely they are to have a job and the less likely they are to not have a job.

■ Higher Job Position

People with lower levels of education are less likely to have high level jobs. They are more likely to hold lower-level jobs. People with bachelor's or advanced degrees are more likely to be employed as managers and professionals.

■ Higher Income and Greater Lifetime Earnings

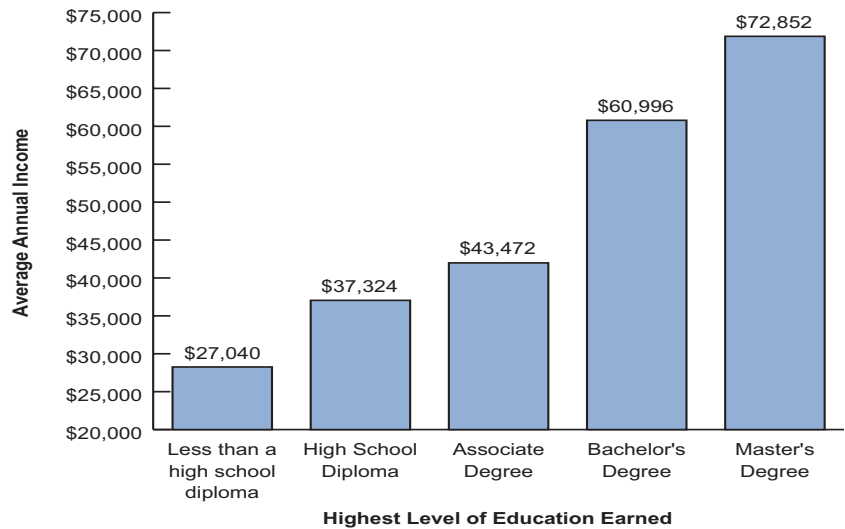
Most adults who have completed some education after high school earn more money than those who did not continue their education beyond high school. Their annual salaries are higher, and they make more money over their lifetimes.

Discussion Questions

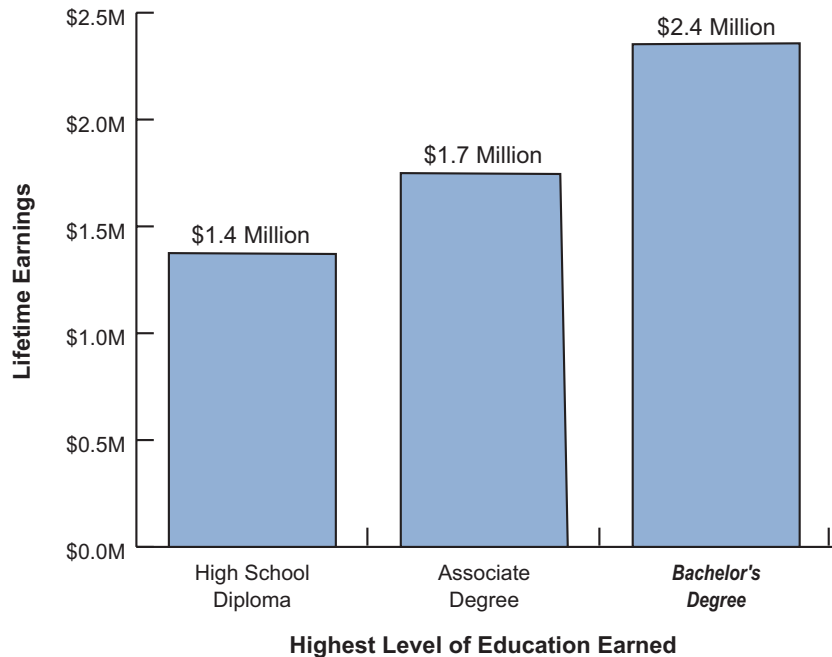
As a family, discuss the following questions together:

- Who do you know who went to college?
- Did he or she complete a degree? Can you tell how this degree changed or benefited his or her life?
- What degree(s) is your student interested in? What might your student want to study?

Average Annual Adult Income — United States¹



Lifetime Earnings (in millions of dollars) — United States²



¹ Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017

² Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017 (averaged at 40 years each)

