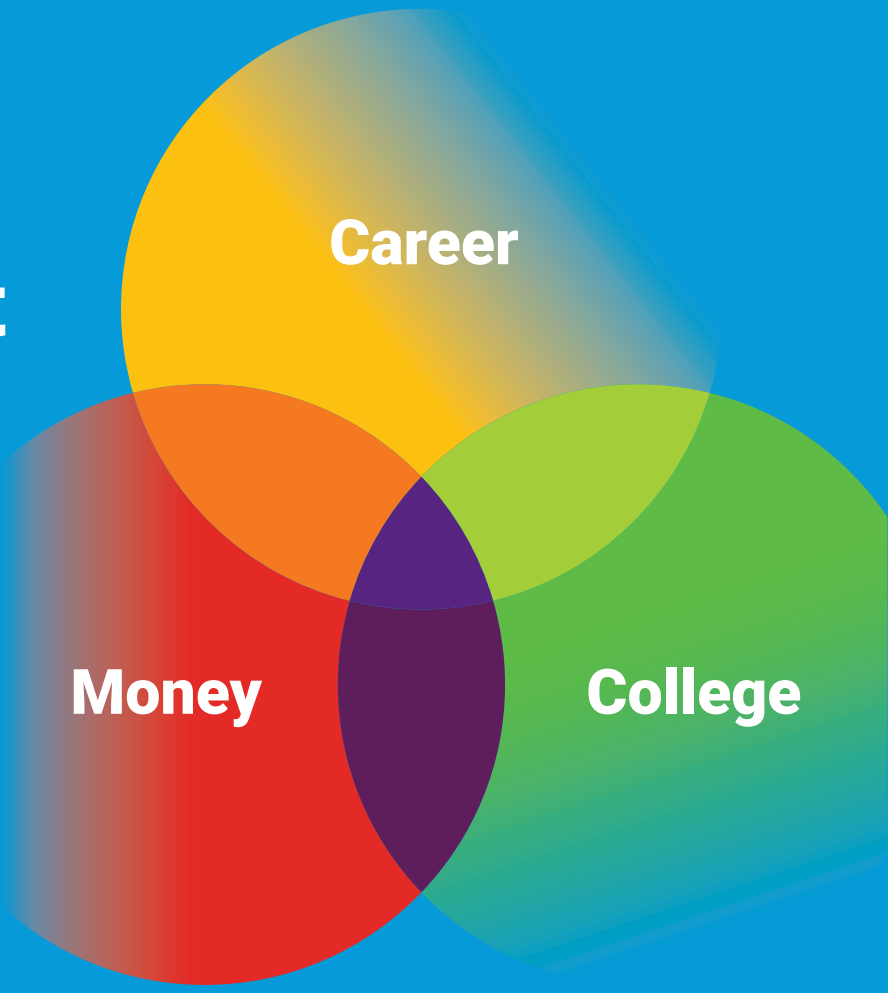
PaCE Student Checklist

The PaCE Student Checklist is a tool to help students prepare for life after high school. Students can use this checklist at each grade level to explore activities and experiences that can help them prepare for college and career.



The checklist is organized around the same three key areas as the Illinois PaCE (Postsecondary and Career Expectations) Framework:

- **Career -** Career Exploration and Development
- **Money -** Financial Aid and Literacy
- **College -** Postsecondary Education Exploration, Preparation, and Selection

IllinoisPaCE

For more information on the PaCE Framework, please see **isac.org/pace**

PaCE Student Checklist

8TH GRADE



Career

- ☐ Identify potential careers you are interested in. To help you identify a career of interest, you can complete a survey at **studentportal.isac.org > College Resources > Illinois WorkNet > Skills and Interests >**.
- ☐ A career cluster is a group of jobs that are related by skills or products. Each cluster has classes or training opportunities to prepare you for a career in that cluster. To explore the idea of career clusters, go to **studentportal.isac.org > College Resources > IL WorkNet > Careers, Wages, and Trends >**.
- ☐ Research careers you are interested in to find out what the job responsibilities are for each career, and what kind of education and skills are needed.
- ☐ Speak with someone from a career you are interested in and ask them what their favorite and least favorite part of their job is, as well as how much education is needed for their job.



Money

- ☐ Ask someone you know that went to college (teacher, family member, etc.) about grants, scholarships, loans, and working while attending college. How did they find the money to pay for college?



College

- ☐ Create a plan with potential classes you need and want to take in high school to prepare for college. Think of taking interesting and challenging classes to explore your interests.
- ☐ Talk to your school counselor, teacher, or family member about how community service and extracurricular activities can help you explore your college and career goals.

PaCE Student Checklist

9TH GRADE



Career

- ☐ Revisit the careers you are interested in and expand on your current career interests. Identify one or two new careers that you might want to explore.
- ☐ Explore career clusters by going to **studentportal.isac.org > College Resources > IL WorkNet > Careers, Wages, and Trends >**.
- ☐ Research careers you are interested in to find out what the job responsibilities are for each career, and what kind of education and skills are needed.
- ☐ Consider talking to someone who works in those careers about their favorite and least favorite part of their job, as well as how much education is needed for their job.



Money

- ☐ Talk to your parent(s)/guardian or your local ISACorps member about what financial resources are available to help you pay for college. You can use the FAFSA4Caster (**fafsa.ed.gov/FAFSA/app/f4cForm**) to estimate your eligibility for federal student aid.
- ☐ Research how much it would cost to attend an:

  - in-state 4-year *public* college/university vs. in-state 4-year *private* college/university

  - *in-state* 4-year public college/university vs. *out-of-state* 4-year public college/university

  - *in-state* 4-year *private* college/university vs. *out-of-state* 4-year *private* college/university

  - local *community college* vs. *in-state 4-year public* college/university and *in-state 4-year private* college/university

  To compare colleges and degree programs by cost you can visit **studentportal.isac.org > College Resources > College Scorecard >**.



College

- ☐ Research what degree/certificate programs colleges offer.
- ☐ Make an appointment to meet with a counselor at your school to talk about what classes you need to take to prepare for college.
- ☐ Talk to your counselor about Advanced Placement (AP) classes: what the courses require as well as how and when you can take them.
- ☐ Identify different community service and extracurricular activities that could help you explore your career interests.
- ☐ Talk to your school counselor or teacher about how your school grades and attendance can affect your future plans for life after high school.
- ☐ Talk to your school counselor or teacher about why it is important to get involved in community service and extracurricular activities and how it can affect your future/college plans.

PaCE Student Checklist

10TH GRADE

Career

- ☐ Get in contact with someone who works in a career you are interested in and ask if you can visit or take a tour of where they work. When you visit their workplace, think about whether you could see yourself there in the future.
- ☐ Explore career clusters by going to **studentportal.isac.org > College Resources > IL WorkNet > Careers, Wages, and Trends >**.
- ☐ Of the careers you researched and are interested in, pick a favorite and identify what steps you can take to help you get there. Write out a plan.
- ☐ For your top career choice, research what jobs people start out in, how much they make per year, and how much education is needed for the entry level job vs. higher level job.

Money

- ☐ Plan to attend a presentation on college financial aid with an adult family member. To find a financial aid presentation near you, go to **studentportal.isac.org > Toolbox > Event Calendar >**.

College

- ☐ Talk to your school counselor and see if you can take any Advanced Placement (AP) classes during your junior year.
- ☐ Talk to 2-3 adults (e.g., parent, relative, teacher, coach, counselor/ advisory) and express that you would like to receive their support and help in preparing for college and your future career.
- ☐ Figure out what your current GPA is, the GPA requirement for your college of interest, and what you need to work on to get your GPA where it needs to be. (Do this each year!)
- ☐ Research the differences between associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctorate's degrees. Also, research the differences among a community college vs. university vs. college vs. trade school.
- ☐ Research what exams (example: SAT or ACT) you need to take to be accepted into college, when and where you can take them, how much it costs to take them, and how you can prepare for them.
- ☐ Talk to your school counselor about dual-credit and AP classes: how and when you can take them, as well as how you can benefit in college from taking these classes.

PaCE Student Checklist

11TH GRADE

Career

- ☐ Re-take the career interest survey you took in 9th grade. To complete a career interest survey visit **studentportal.isac.org > College Resources > Illinois WorkNet > Skills and Interests >**.
- ☐ To get a job, employers will want to interview you. To prepare for this, see if a teacher, counselor, or family member would be willing to do a mock interview with you.
- ☐ Create a resume and have it reviewed by a teacher or counselor. To get help in building a resume visit **studentportal.isac.org > College Resources > Illinois Work Net Center >**. In addition, create a personal statement for your college applications. Ask a teacher, counselor, or family member to review and provide you with feedback on your personal statement.
- ☐ Find an internship or summer job to help you get experience in a field you are interested in. Visit **studentportal.isac.org > Toolbox > Internship and Summer Jobs >**.
- ☐ Research what colleges have the degree or certificate program you are interested in. Find out their cost of attendance, admissions application deadline, and any additional requirements you may need to fulfill.
- ☐ Research different aspects of a career you are interested in, including responsibilities, salary, education requirement, and employment opportunities.

Money

- ☐ Research what scholarships the colleges you are interested in offer. Also, research national, state, and local scholarships that you can apply for by visiting **stuentportal.isac.org/resources>cappex**. Keep track of application deadlines by writing them down in your calendar. Start applying!

College

- ☐ Talk to your counselor about what classes you still need to take to fulfill the requirements to be accepted into college.
- ☐ Talk to your counselor to see whether you can take a dual-credit and/or AP class during your junior or senior year.
- ☐ Make arrangements to take the SAT or ACT exam. Consider taking a practice test beforehand.
- ☐ Talk to a college recruiter from the colleges you are interested in attending. Gather information on how much they cost to attend, what scholarships they offer, what degree and/or certificate programs they offer, and any other opportunities they offer.
- ☐ Take an in-person or virtual tour of at least three colleges you are interested in attending.
- ☐ Research the colleges you are interested in and find out the following information: application deadline, application fee, application requirements, and program of study if you were to attend.
- ☐ Determine what colleges you will be applying to next year. You want to have one “safety”, three “match” and one “reach” college. Research the terms “match”, “safety,” and “reach” college if you haven’t heard them before.
- ☐ Identify what level of math and English courses you need to take so you don’t have to start college with classes that don’t count as credits toward your degree.

PaCE Student Checklist

12TH GRADE

Career

- ☐ Talk to your counselor to see if you need to take any additional math/ELA classes to graduate and be accepted into college.
- ☐ Take advantage of an internship/job shadow opportunity or summer job to get experience in the field you are interested in. Find an internship or summer job by visiting **studentportal.isac.org > Toolbox > Internship and Summer Jobs >**.
- ☐ If your school awards industry-based certifications, research the process and requirements to receive a certificate related to your career pathway.
- ☐ Complete a project or activity with a group of friends focused on everyone's career pathway. To explore your career pathway visit **bigfuture.collegeboard.org/explore-careers**.
- ☐ Talk to your counselor about how a dual-credit class, AP class, internship, or summer job could help you decide what program of study you'd like to pursue in college.

Money

- ☐ Attend a FAFSA completion workshop with your parent(s). To find a financial aid workshop near you, visit **studentportal.isac.org > Toolbox > Event Calendar >**.
- ☐ Complete your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after October 1st.
- ☐ Attend a financial aid award letter workshop, sit down with your school counselor or ISACorps member, or use the online award comparison tool at **studentportal.isac.org > Toolbox > Financial Aid Comparison Worksheet >** to compare your financial aid award letters.
- ☐ Talk to your parent(s) about what school you want to attend, what your financial aid package includes, if there are any out-of-pocket costs, and your plan for future college years.
- ☐ For the college(s) of your choice, use the Illinois WorkNet Center and College Scorecard tools (under the Resources tab at studentportal.isac.org) to find out the average entry-level salary, graduation rates, and average salary after graduation.
- ☐ Research the difference between federal government and private loans. Research their terms, conditions and repayment options. In addition, research the requirements to keep and renew any scholarships received.

College

- ☐ Apply to the five colleges you determined you would apply to (one safety, three match, and one reach). It's good to have options.
- ☐ Figure out what your current GPA is, where you need it to be to get into college, and what you need to work on to get it where it needs to be. Talk to your counselor to make sure you are on track to graduate and have completed all of the classes necessary to be accepted into college.