**Researching High Schools**

**Summary**

In this lesson, students first access their prior knowledge of what colleges are looking for in a Student Profile through a written reflection. Then, students will review recommended courses to take in high school in order to be prepared for college. Using this knowledge, students will research high schools—keeping a focus on high schools that implement a curriculum with the recommended courses—and practice using both **Research Do’s and Don’ts** as well as **Match and Fit** guidelines. Finally, students will reflect on their current high school options and identify both the appeal and merits of the school through a homework assignment*.*

**Grades**

* 7

**Content Modules**

* High School Awareness and Selection

**Objectives**

Students will:

* Articulate and discuss their definition of a “good” school.
* Discuss recommended high school courses to prepare for college.
* Practice researching high schools based on Match and Fit criteria.
* Analyze and evaluate what they want in a high school.

**Length**

1 Session

**Additional Resources**

* [Researching High Schools\_Recommended HS Courses.pdf](https://www.6to16.org/files/attachments/543eb264a7fb044886a8a1a1cd254b7e.pdf)
* [Researching High Schools\_Research Dos and Donts.pdf](https://www.6to16.org/files/attachments/6e8eb42529d7f5eff5b8b393409a452f.pdf)
* [Researching High Schools\_HS Hunt.pdf](https://www.6to16.org/files/attachments/8ecdae3c243a70a58079ef3cdf1d096e.pdf)

**Related Lessons**

* [What is a “Good” High School?](https://www.6to16.org/lessons/view/42)
* [Understanding High School Options](https://www.6to16.org/lessons/view/102)
* [What is Fit? High School](https://www.6to16.org/lessons/view/149)

**Related E-Learning: What Makes a Good High School**

**Materials and Resources**

**Offline:**

* Recommended High School Courses
* Research Do’s and Don’ts
* High School Hunt
* 6to16 Notebook
* Common Application (optional)
* Local Newspaper (optional)

**Online:**

* Internet Access

**Teacher’s Note*:*** *Access to a computer lab is ideal for this lesson.*

**Higher-Level Thinking Skills**

Evaluation, Analysis

**Vocabulary**

Reach school, Transcript, Portfolio

**Assessment(s)**

Students will write down their definition of what makes a school “good”. Students will also complete a **High School Hunt** that tests their comprehension of the **Research Do’s and Don’ts** and that follows Match and Fit guidelines. For homework, students will assess their own high school options and identify both their appeal and their merit.

**Do Now (5 minutes)**

1)  Write the following prompt on the board:

* What criteria do colleges use as they evaluate students for admission?

2)  Give students a few minutes to write their responses. Ask a few volunteers to share.

3)  Make sure students understand that colleges, especially selective colleges, look for a range of criteria. They are also looking for students who match and fit well with the college. They want to admit students that are going to succeed at their school. Schools look at the following criteria:

* **Grades:** Schools will certainly look at your transcript. Grades show how well you have learned content, but they also say something about your study skills and habits. If you have a low grade one semester and a higher grade the next that shows that you can work hard to improve.
* **Test Scores:** Standardized tests like the SAT and ACT allow schools to compare your skills and achievement across schools. All students take the same test so they are able to compare apples to apples.
* **Extra-curricular Activities:** The clubs, sports, and activities that you do outside of class show schools that you are a well-rounded person. They also tell a school that you can work with others, manage your time, and take on leadership and responsibility.
* **Volunteer Work:** Similar to extra-curricular activities, volunteering can also show that you are a well-rounded person with useful experience. Volunteering also gives you real-world experience and exposure to a variety of careers.
* **Recommendations:** Letters of recommendation give the admissions office a different perspective on the kind of person that you are and the quality of work that you can produce. They usually come from a teacher or a professional that have worked closely with you and can speak to your abilities as a student or community leader. Start thinking about who you would want to write your letters and why.  Remember to be polite and give those who are graciously writing a letter on your behalf plenty of time to do so.
* **Portfolio:** A student portfolio is a collection of your best work over time. This is an opportunity for you to showcase their unique talents and strengths. In addition, if you have competed at a science fair, a poetry competition, or other academic competitions this is also a great place to showcase your work.

**Class Activity (40 minutes)**

**College Readiness Curriculum**:

1)  Handout copies of the **Recommended High School Courses** and talk through them with your students.

2)  Emphasize that some high schools do not require 4 years of English to graduate and most do not require 4 years of math, science or social studies, but most selective schools are looking for 4 years in each of those subjects.

**High School Hunting**:

1)  Hand students copies of the **Research Do’s and Don’ts** and the **High School Hunt** handouts. Explain to students that they will be going online to complete the **High School Hunt**. Tell students that they should use the **Research Do’s and Don’ts** and the guiding questions on the **High School** **Hunt** handout to guide them.

* Make sure to highlight these two recommended websites to start with: localschooldirectory.com or greatschools.org
* Students should find three different high schools in the area and complete the questions on the sheet for each school.

2)  Give students 20 minutes to go online and practice researching schools.

**Teacher’s Note:** I*f you have a limited number of computers you can either have students complete the* ***High School Hunt*** *activity in pairs or you can do it all together as a class on a projector. If you are doing it together as a class, make sure to still have students complete their own copies of the* ***High School Hunt****.*

3)  To conclude the session, ask the following questions:

* Which high school do you think you will attend?
* Why do you like that school?
* How will attending that school prepare you for college?
* What are the requirements for admission for the school?
* Were there any requirements that we did not list earlier in the lesson?

4)  Ask a few volunteers to share their responses with the class.

**Homework**

Students will reflect on and write essay responses to the following questions in their **6to16 Notebooks**. Instruct students to write in paragraph form, use complete sentences and use proper grammar.

1. What is your definition of a “good” high school?
2. What are your current high school options?
3. What makes these schools attractive?
4. How will these schools help prepare you for college?
5. What will you do now to improve your chances of getting into these high schools?

**Additional Activities**

**Lesson Extension**

**Local Newspaper**

High school students are always in the local newspaper. Take a few clippings out of the newspaper that showcase student work or school news and bring them in. Make copies of the newspaper clippings and use them to have a discussion with your students about the reputation of the school and the opportunities the school is giving its students.

**Student Alumni Panel**

Contact 3 or 4 alumni of students’ current middle/K-8 school who have gone on to different high schools and invite them to come in on a scheduled day and time to sit on an alumni panel. Ask alumni to share their high school experiences with your students especially as they relate to finding a high school that fits and matches with their needs and preferences. Make sure to leave time for students to ask questions.

**Common Application**

Print out copies of the **Common Application** and hand them out to your students. Use the application to supplement the discussion on what colleges are looking for. Especially spend time focusing on the Academics and Extra-Curricular Activities section. Use this as an opportunity to give students a perspective on what colleges are looking for and how what they are doing today will help them get to college in the future.