**What is High School?**

**Summary**

This lesson enables teachers to evaluate students’ prior knowledge regarding high school, discern students’ concerns regarding transitioning to high school, and share some of their personal high school experiences.

Students will use a role-play activity to identify potential difficulties they may experience at the beginning of high school.

Students will discuss the importance of their high school performance and view testimonials of college graduates who share how they used the opportunities presented to them in high school to prepare for college.

**Grades**

* 6

**Content Modules**

* High School Awareness and Selection

**Objectives**

Students will:

* Evaluate their own perceptions and ideas about high school and compare them with those of their classmates, teacher, and college graduates.
* Analyze the various experiences and components of high school (i.e., academic, social, and extracurricular) as they relate to future life success.
* Measure their awareness and understanding of typical requirements needed to apply for college.

**Length**

1 Session

**Additional Resources**

* [Round4.HighSchoolAwareness.6thGrade - What is High School\_KWL Chart.pdf](https://www.6to16.org/files/attachments/82f7289fc65cba6b22e7ee6d192b270b.pdf)

**Related E-Learning**

* [What Makes a Good High School?](https://www.6to16.org/elearning/activities/143)
* [The Importance of High School Performance](https://www.6to16.org/elearning/activities/154)

**Materials and Resources**

**Offline:**

* KWL Chart – What is High School?
* 6to16 Notebook

**Online:**

* The Importance of High School Performance e-Learning Activity (Additional Activity)
* What Makes a Good High School (Additional Activity)

**Higher-Level Thinking Skills**

Evaluation, Analysis, Application

**Vocabulary**

Workload, Class selection, Extracurricular, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB)

**Assessment(s)**

KWL Chart – What is High School? Students will summarize new knowledge of high school on the **KWL Chart.**

**Do Now (10 minutes)**

1)  Distribute the **KWL Chart – What is High School?** handout.

2)  Instruct students to complete the first two columns on the chart (i.e., “What do you KNOW about high school?” and “What do you WANT to know about high school?”). Tell the students to ignore the third column for now.

3)  Ask students to share their responses to the first two prompts on the handout.

4)  Invite students to share one thing they already know about high school and one question they have about high school with a partner.

5)  Ask a few pairs to share with the whole class.

6)  Write students’ responses in a KWL chart on the board.  Responses to the **Do Now** question will provide insight into their perceptions of high school and what they want to learn about high school.

**Class Activity (35 minutes)**

**“What is High School?” Class Discussion:**

1. Address any misconceptions and questions students may have regarding the high school experience, through asking students to pair-share their perceptions of high school, using the following questions as prompts:

What have your family and friends told me about high school?

What are you looking forward to in high school? How will high school be different from your current school experience?

2) After students share in pairs, ask them to come back together as a group. Ask several pairs to share out their thoughts, and respond to student perceptions of high school

3) Now, ask students to, independently, write down several concerns they have about high school. After students are finished, break them into groups of 3-4, and have groups record concerns they have as a group about high school.

**Role-Play:**

1)  Instruct each group to create a fictional student. Each group should use one of the concerns it has generated to construct a 1 to 2 minute role-play scenario where the fictional student faces her or his concern and takes an action to try to deal with the concern.

2)  Invite groups to act out their role-play scenario in front of the class.

3)  Following each performance, ask audience members to evaluate the effectiveness of the fictional students response to the concern and provide potential alternative solutions to the problem. Provide guidance and clarification as needed.

4)  Ask students to choose one of the following common concerns students have regarding transitioning to high school and write a solution in their **6to16 Notebooks**:

* *Finding their classes at a large school*
* *Making friends*
* *Increased workload*
* *Class selection*

5)  After students have had enough time to respond, write the following suggestions for handling the situations on the board:

* ***Finding their classes at a large school***: Many high schools host a freshman orientation the summer before students attend the school. At this time, students receive their class schedule and can tour the building to locate all of their classes.
* ***Making friends***: Students can meet other students that share similar interests and activities by joining a club or extracurricular activity.  Most high schools have a wide variety of extracurricular activities that range from sports, academic enrichment, social service opportunities, and special interest groups.
* ***Increased workload***: In high school, students will take 6 – 7 classes per semester, usually taught by different teachers.  In order to manage the increased workload, students will need to be organized.
* ***Class selection***: There are core courses all students must take in order to fulfill graduation requirements. Students also have the option to explore personal areas of interests by taking elective classes. Students can ask the school counselor or a teacher for guidance with regards to class selection.

6)  Ask students to share the activities they are interested in participating in during high school.  If students cannot think of any extracurricular activities they are interested in, ask them to brainstorm what they do or would like to do in their free time.

**Teacher’s Note:** *If students do not know what “extracurricular activities” are, provide the following definition: Activities performed by students that fall outside of the normal curriculum (e.g. soccer, piano lessons, art club)*

7)  As a class, offer suggestions for extracurricular activities that may interest the student.  For example, students who enjoy reading comic books may be interested in joining a club where the members create their own comic books or apply their graphic skills by working on the student newspaper or yearbook.

**Teacher’s Note*:*** *Students may not know the breadth of extracurricular activities offered at high schools.  Encourage them to learn more about the extracurricular activities offered at a high school they are interested in attending by visiting the high school’s web page.*

**Teacher’s High School Story**: *Share some of your personal high school experiences with students. Topics you may want to discuss include (but are not limited to):*

* Where did you go to high school?
* What was high school like for you overall?
* What were you nervous about?
* What are some of your happiest high school memories?
* What were some of the most challenging aspects of high school?
* What do you wish you’d known then that you know now?

“**Why is Your High School Performance Important?” Class Discussion**

1)  Ask students to explain why their high school performance is important.  You may use the following points to guide the discussion:

1. High school is an important stepping-stone on the path to college.  High school will prepare them for the college admissions process and college courses.
2. Students’ high school academic performance largely determines whether a student will graduate from high school and be accepted into a competitive college.
3. Consider the long-term benefits of higher education. High school graduation is a critical step in realizing such benefits.

2)  Introduce the concept of “beginning with the end in mind” with the end goal being life as a college graduate. There are milestones students must achieve in order to achieve this goal. One of the key milestones is earning a high school diploma.

3)  Explain that students must learn their high schools’ graduation requirements early in their freshman year. Emphasize how it is also crucial for students to take the courses that will prepare them for college. Explain that many colleges require that their students take the following in high school:

* 4 years of language arts
* 3-4 years of mathematics
* 3-4 years of science
* 3-4 years of history
* 2-4 years of a foreign language

**Homework**

1)  Instruct students to complete the last column of the **KWL Chart – What is High School?** by summarizing what they learned about high school from the class discussions.

**Additional Activities**

1) **The Importance of High School Performance** **e-Learning Activity** offers many videos of college graduates sharing their perspective on why high school performance is important and the steps they took during high school to prepare for college.  Project the videos to the class. To access the videos, select the “Paving the Way” section in the upper left corner.

**Teacher’s Note***: In the first video, the interviewee explains how Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses prepared her for college courses. Prior to watching the video, explain to students that AP classes are college-level classes students can take in high school.  The majority of colleges in the U.S. will grant students college credit if they receive an acceptable score on the exams. The IB program offers challenging and academically advanced curriculum.*

2)  Ask students to write a response to the following questions in their **6to16 Notebooks:**

* What have you learned about the importance of academic performance in high school?
* What surprised them about the video?
* Did the videos inspire you to think of how you can use you high school experience to prepare you for college?