

# The Four Keys

## Unlocking High School Success and the Path to College

The keys to your student's success in high school and beyond are within reach. Being informed about:

- A–G coursework
- Academic enrichment
- College knowledge
- College entrance exams

will help you guide your student through this important time.

### ❖ Key #1: A–G Coursework

A–G coursework is the name given to the series of courses required for admission to the University of California (UC) and to California State University (CSU). Each high school has an approved list of “Doorways” A–G coursework, which can be found at [www.eaop.org/resources](http://www.eaop.org/resources) or at the high school guidance office.

Become familiar with A–G courses at your student's high school.

Encourage your student to challenge him- or herself by taking Honors and Advanced Placement courses in his or her strong subjects starting in the sophomore year.

Use the EAOP Academic Planner—available to anyone online ([www.eaop.org/resources](http://www.eaop.org/resources))—to plan coursework.

### A–G Requirements

California State University • University of California

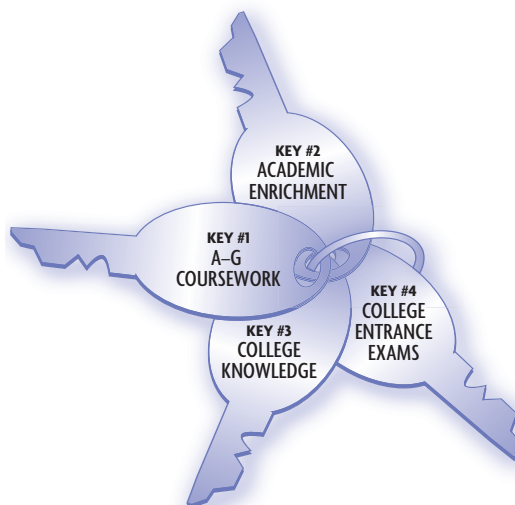
<b>A • History</b> 2 YEARS REQUIRED
<b>B • English</b> 4 YEARS REQUIRED
<b>C • Mathematics</b> 3 YEARS REQUIRED 4 YEARS RECOMMENDED
<b>D • Laboratory Science</b> 2 YEARS REQUIRED 3 YEARS RECOMMENDED
<b>E • Language</b> 2 YEARS REQUIRED 3 YEARS RECOMMENDED
<b>F • Visual and Performing Arts</b> 1 YEAR REQUIRED
<b>G • College Prep Elective</b> 1 YEAR REQUIRED

### ❖ Key #2: Academic Enrichment

Academic enrichment activities strengthen academic skills, enable students to do well in their classes and prepare them for more challenging coursework in high school and beyond. Examples are:

- SAT/ACT test-preparation services
- Summer session courses at colleges
- Writing workshops and math programs
- Concurrent enrollment at community college
- Summer research internships

These important activities expose students to a college environment and allow them to explore a subject at a deeper level. Find information on fantastic academic enrichment programs at [www.eaop.org/resources](http://www.eaop.org/resources).



### ❖ Key #3: College Knowledge

College knowledge is a term that refers to all of the college-related information your family learns. By participating in activities that increase college knowledge, your student will have the information he or she needs to make decisions about college and you will have the information to support your student on this path.

Students can build their college knowledge by:

- Visiting college campuses
- Attending financial aid and college application workshops
- Taking part in leadership development activities
- Participating in career exploration workshops

Parents and families can build their college knowledge by:

- Attending college and career fairs, family nights or workshops at your student's school.
- Talking with your student's counselor, teachers or other school administrators.
- Reading college-related materials and conducting online research.

### ❖ Key #4: College Entrance Exams

College entrance exams are part of the application process.

Students take the SAT Reasoning Exam or the ACT Exam (the ACT Plus Writing Exam for UC applicants) in their junior year.

Many students re-take the exams in the fall of their senior year. Be sure your student takes exams and submits scores by the December deadline.

The University of California also requires two SAT Subject Exams in two different areas:

- History
- Literature
- Math (level 2 only)
- Science
- Language other than English

Fee waivers are available.

Free test-preparation programs may be offered at the local library, community center, academic outreach program or at your student's school.

Taking the PLAN (the “pre-ACT” test) and/or PSAT exam early is also a great way to become familiar with the exam experience.

*For frequently used terms, see page 3.*

## MAXIMIZING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

At right are the class schedules of two students who have completed their A–G requirements. Student 1 completed only the required number of A–G courses, while Student 2 also took Honors and AP courses, which shows readiness for college-level work. To be competitively eligible, go beyond the basic requirements with:

- Strong grades in challenging coursework
- Engagement and leadership in extra-curricular activities
- Participation in available academic enrichment opportunities
- High scores on college entrance exams
- Taking more than the minimum A–G course requirements

To gain admission to more selective colleges, students should focus on being competitively eligible. Your student's course pattern may vary.

Student 1: Eligible					
A–G	Subject Category	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
A	History		World History	U.S. History	
B	English	English 1	English 2	English 3	English 4
C	Mathematics	Algebra 1	Geometry	Algebra 2	
D	Lab Science		Biology	Chemistry	
E	Language other than English		Spanish 1	Spanish 2	
F	Visual & Performing Arts		Band 1		
G	College Prep Electives				Economics

Student 2: Competitive					
A–G	Subject Category	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
A	History		World History	AP U.S. History	American Government
B	English	English 1	English 2	Honors English 3	AP English Literature
C	Mathematics	Algebra 1	Geometry	Algebra 2/Trigonometry	Honors Pre-Calculus
D	Lab Science		Biology	Chemistry	Physics
E	Language other than English	Spanish 1	Spanish 2	Spanish 3	AP Spanish
F	Visual & Performing Arts	Theater 1	Theater 2		
G	College Prep Electives			Psychology	Economics

### WEBSITES

#### A–G Coursework:

- [www.eaop.org/resources](http://www.eaop.org/resources)

#### College Entrance Exams:

- [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)
- [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)

#### College Knowledge:

- [www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu)  
(California State University campuses)
- [www.californiacolleges.edu](http://www.californiacolleges.edu)  
(All California colleges)
- [www.universityofcalifornia.edu](http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu)  
(University of California campuses)
- [www.cccco.edu](http://www.cccco.edu)  
(All California community colleges)
- [www.knowhow2go.org](http://www.knowhow2go.org)

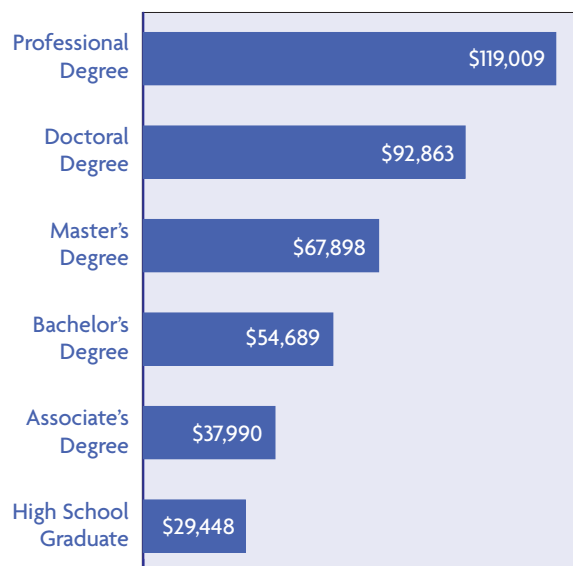
#### Parent and Family Websites:

- [www.firstinthefamily.org](http://www.firstinthefamily.org)
- [www.blackexcel.org](http://www.blackexcel.org)
- [www.boostup.org](http://www.boostup.org)
- [www.byparents-forparents.com](http://www.byparents-forparents.com)

### WHY GO TO COLLEGE?

- **Gain knowledge!** College students acquire skills and expertise in subjects that excite them. They learn how to think critically and express their thoughts.
- **Expand horizons!** College life is full of opportunities to meet new friends, interact with experts in numerous fields and gain hands-on learning and work experiences.
- **A secure future!** Higher education is associated with better working conditions, more promotion opportunities and job stability.
- **More career options!** More and more jobs require education past high school.
- **Earn more money!** A person with a college degree has the potential to earn more money than a person without one.

#### The connection between income and educational attainment



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Study, 2006.

## FREQUENTLY USED TERMS

**Academic Enrichment:** These opportunities reinforce and improve basic academic skills, prepare students for more challenging coursework, and provide academic experiences that go beyond those available through the normal school curriculum.

**ACT Exam:** A 3½-hour national college admissions exam that tests your student's knowledge in English, Math, Reading and Science. The ACT Plus Writing Exam includes a 30-minute Writing Test. Most colleges require that students take the ACT Exam or the SAT Reasoning Exam as a college entrance requirement.

**A–G Coursework:** A series of courses required for admission to the University of California (UC) and to the California State University (CSU). Each high school has an approved list of “Doorways” A–G coursework, which can be found through [www.eaop.org/resources](http://www.eaop.org/resources) or at the high school guidance office.

### Advanced Placement (AP) Courses:

College-level courses in a variety of subject areas that students can take while in high school. Students can boost their high school GPA by doing well in AP courses because they will earn more grade points in AP classes. When completed, students have the option of taking the corresponding AP Exam and earn college credit.

### Extra-Curricular Activities:

Activities that happen outside of the school day, including jobs (whether paid or unpaid), school-based activities (such as student government, service clubs, yearbook, etc.) or activities affiliated with a community organization or a faith-based community.

**SAT Reasoning Exam:** The SAT is a 3¾ hour test that measures critical thinking, mathematical reasoning, and writing skills. Most colleges require that students take this or the ACT as a college entrance requirement.

**SAT Subject Exams:** Many colleges require SAT Subject Exams. UC requires two. Your student should take the exam as soon as possible after completing the corresponding course.

### If You Speak Limited English

Communication with counselors, teachers and school administration helps your student succeed.

- If your student's school has an ELAC (English Language Advisory Committee), participate. This group of parents, teachers and school administrators helps ELD (English Language Development) students. It is an opportunity to meet school staff and get useful information.
- Some schools have a parent website. You can learn about school events and monitor your student's academic progress.
- Talk with other parents and ask them about school resources they have found.
- Locate school personnel (counselors, secretary, teachers, librarian, etc.) who speak your language.
- Your school district may have a Family and Community department. They can help you find services and programs for families and students with limited English-speaking skills.
- Share valuable information with others! Make sure information you share and receive is correct.

### California Higher Educational Systems at a Glance

System	California Community Colleges (CCC)	California State University (CSU)	University of California (UC)	California Independent Colleges and Universities
Number of Campuses	109	23	10	76
College Entrance Exams	None Required. Students may need to take assessment exams after applying.	ACT or SAT required if grade point average is below 3.0	ACT Plus Writing or SAT Reasoning <b>and</b> two SAT Subject Exams	ACT or SAT Reasoning (check with college or university)
Minimum Grade Point Average (GPA)	No Minimum GPA A–G coursework recommended	Minimum 2.0 in A–G coursework	Minimum 3.0 in A–G coursework	Varies (check with college or university)
Degrees Offered	Associate's degrees and vocational certificates	Bachelor's and Master's degrees	Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral and Professional Degrees	Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral and Professional degrees

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q:** Where can I find my student's A–G courses?

**A:** The school counselor will have the list of A–G courses, or you can link to your school's list through [www.eaop.org/resources](http://www.eaop.org/resources).

**Q:** What if my student receives a D or lower in an A–G course?

**A:** Talk to your student's high school counselor immediately. There will be different options:

- Retaking the course (this is the option that should be taken whenever possible)
- Taking a comparable course at a community college
- Taking an approved online course

Your student's counselor will help you make the best decision. The key is addressing this quickly!

**Q:** How can I support my student in preparing for college?

**A:** Connect with your student's school. Communicate with school staff and administration.

- Monitor your student's academic performance.
- Help your student find resources.
- Participate in college knowledge activities such as college fairs and campus tours.

**Q:** How do I know if my student qualifies for a fee waiver for the SAT Reasoning Exam, SAT Subject Exam, ACT or college admissions?

**A:** If your family qualifies for free and reduced lunch, you will qualify for a fee waiver.

- The high school counselor will have information on fee waivers for the ACT and SAT.
- Get more information about fee waivers for the ACT at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) and for the SAT at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

**Q:** What do college admissions offices look for when examining a student's extra-curricular activities?

**A:** Colleges prefer to see sustained participation over time in a few activities rather than minimal participation in numerous clubs. A strong applicant will also have leadership roles.

**Q:** My student is unable to participate in after-school academic enrichment activities. Are there opportunities for academic enrichment that take place at other times?

**A:** Some activities take place on the weekends or in the summer. Also look for opportunities that may be short-term (a couple of weeks) since adjusting your family's schedule for shorter-term activities may be easier.

### Parent Spotlight: Ragini K.

Ragini is the parent of two sons: her youngest is in the tenth grade, and her eldest will be attending college this fall. Her older son is a hard-working and resourceful student who applied broadly to colleges and universities in the fall of his senior year. Ragini encouraged him to apply for scholarships, which he did, and he was awarded two partial scholarships. During high school her son participated in several academic enrichment activities, took a college-level course on a college campus and participated in an SAT preparation program. To help her sons prepare for college, Ragini attended a few parent events at her sons' school, and focused her attention on motivating them to do well academically. Ragini made sure her students were keeping up with their school work, asking them daily, "Do you have homework? Are you doing okay in school?" Ragini and both of her sons' hard work has definitely been fruitful. Her eldest son will attend UC Berkeley this fall and is excited about exploring his academic interests in Mathematics and Engineering.

### Parent Spotlight: A. Davenport

Mrs. Davenport is the parent of a daughter who will be attending San Francisco State University in the fall. Taking courses at the local community college as a high school student gave her daughter a taste of college academic rigor, pushing her to work hard her senior year. Mrs. Davenport believes that a college education positively impacts the life of a young person, influencing his or her perspective on life and his or her future. "As a parent you want to see your children accomplish things you weren't able to and you want your children to have more opportunities. I want to see my daughter excel further." Mrs. Davenport strives to show her children that although challenges exist in the real world, the key is planning ahead and setting goals. Her advice to parents is to tell their children, "There is tomorrow and then there is the next day. Everyone needs a plan to fall back on, even Kobe Bryant and Magic Johnson!"