



# How Much Is an Education Worth?

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**Time Frame** 90-120 session(s)

## Essential Question(s)

- What are the benefits of pursuing postsecondary education or training?
- How do student interests and skills prepare them for career choices?
- What resources are available to help families pay for postsecondary education?

## Summary

The family engagement event focuses on informing parents and students about the benefits of pursuing postsecondary education. Information will be provided about educational options after high school, students will take an online career interest survey to begin investigating career choices, and participants will learn about the financial resources available for subsidizing a postsecondary degree or training. Materials are provided in both English and Spanish.

## Learning Goals

- Families will gain an understanding of how postsecondary opportunities increase career choices and lifetime earnings.
- Students and their families will investigate two career choices and discover the benefits and challenges of each.
- Families will identify resources and information for the potential funding of postsecondary educational opportunities.

## Attachments

- [Family Engagement Event Activity Design Template.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Bingo Cards—English.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Bingo Cards—Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Career Interest Survey Instructions—English.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Career Interest Survey Instructions—Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Career Trading Cards—English.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Career Trading Cards—Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Highlights—English.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Highlights—Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Postcard—English.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Postcard—Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Poster—11x17—English.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Poster—11x17—Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Poster—8.5x11—English.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Poster—8.5x11—Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Promotional Message Template—Robocalls,Social Media.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Sign-in Sheet—English.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Sign-in Sheet—Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Slide Presentation—English.pptx](#)
- [Family Night Slide Presentation—Spanish.pptx](#)
- [Family Night Welcome Banner—English.pdf](#)
- [Family Night Welcome Banner—Spanish.pdf](#)
- [I Used to Think, But Now I Know—English.pdf](#)
- [I Used to Think, But Now I Know—Spanish.pdf](#)
- [OK Promise App—English.pdf](#)
- [OK Promise App—Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Oklahoma 529 College Savings App.pdf](#)

## Materials

- Printable promotional materials—posters in two sizes (8.5 in. x 11 in., 11 in. x 17 in.), postcard template, welcome banner (English and Spanish versions of each attached)
- Promotional message script for robocalls or social media
- Facilitator presentation slides (English and Spanish versions attached)
- Sign-in sheets (English and Spanish versions attached)
- Bingo cards (English and Spanish versions attached)
- Bingo markers (scrap paper, coins, checkers, etc.)
- Bingo prizes (optional but recommended, even if only small prizes)
- Charged school computers or laptops, one for each student
- Career Interest Survey student handout (English and Spanish versions attached)
- Oklahoma's Promise application (English and Spanish versions attached)
- Oklahoma 529 Savings Plan application
- Career Choice Trading Cards (English and Spanish versions attached)
- I Used to Think ... But Now I Know handout (English and Spanish versions attached)
- Presentation highlights document (English and Spanish versions attached)
- Family Night promotional video: "In Case You Missed It..." (English and Spanish videos attached linked in Resources below)
- Family Engagement Event Activity Design Template
- K20 Center Promotional Videos. English: <https://youtu.be/CNco-6WMrvM> Spanish: <https://youtu.be/APCSXBngPdk>

# Engage

## Before The Event: Preparation For Family Night

This presentation includes materials to advertise and use during the family night event. The only handout that is NOT available on this site is the GEAR UP Rapid Feedback form. Please request this form from your GEAR UP Parent Coordinator several weeks prior to this event. All other materials (bingo boards, sign-in sheets, instructions, and activity handouts) are found in the attachments and should be printed at the site prior to this event. Bingo boards should already be on tables as participants arrive. A "Welcome" banner and promotional materials of various sizes have been included to advertise and direct participants to the event. Please note that the event will work best with multiple facilitators/volunteers. One adult is needed to lead the event and several others are needed to actively participate and assist families with activities. Facilitators of the event can begin by greeting families as they arrive and if necessary student volunteers or other staff members can be stationed at the school building entrance to direct parents to the event location. In addition, clear and easy-to-read signage should be placed around the school guiding families to the event location.

## Presenter's Note: Presentation And Language Options

If you have families who need the presentation in Spanish, it is strongly recommended that you conduct two separate sessions—one in English and one in Spanish. Do not attempt to hold English and Spanish versions of the event simultaneously, translating back and forth, as this practice will be confusing for both facilitators and participants.

Begin by thanking the families for coming. Ask them to sign in (sheets attached) and help themselves to refreshment, if they are available. Display the title slide of the attached presentation as you welcome families.

Let's Play Bingo! (15 to 20 minutes): Direct families' attention to the bingo cards on their tables and invite them to play. Offering prizes, if possible, is recommended. Display slide two, showing a sample bingo card, and explain to families that the words on the cards are all related to college and career readiness. Let them know that it is important for families and their students become more familiar with these terms as students progress toward graduation from high school. Tonight is an introduction to these terms. A facilitator can call out the bingo terms and several rounds may be played as parents are arriving and settling in. It is suggested that this activity last only 15 to 20 minutes or until most parents have arrived and are seated.

Thank the families for playing bingo and remind them that the words they saw on the bingo boards were terms they will be hearing a lot in the next few years as they help their students prepare for more college and career opportunities.

Introduce staff members who are helping with this event. Transition to **slide three** and introduce the agenda for this event. On **slide four**, display the GEAR UP goals and inform participants that their school has been awarded a GEAR UP grant, This grant will help the staff offer further opportunities to families and students for college and career readiness. Display **slide five** that describes some of the events GEAR UP will provide through the school.

## Explore

The Top Ten Benefits of Obtaining a Post-Secondary Education (20 minutes): Show slide six. Ask families to introduce themselves to another family and discuss what they believe are the benefits of their child or children attending college or pursuing a career tech degree after high school. Allow about five minutes for this discussion. Ask staff members to be listening to conversations as they walk around.

Ask for volunteers to share what they discussed as benefits to obtaining a postsecondary education like college or career tech. Allow 5 minutes for a few families to share. Thank those who shared and note that research actually shows there are many benefits or reasons for continuing education after high school. Display slide seven. Explain each benefit as it pops up on slide seven. Point out that several families mentioned some of these benefits (if applicable). This is approximately a five- to seven-minute discussion.

After going through all of the benefits, let participants know that the main goal of the school's partnership with the GEAR UP grant is to equip families with all of the tools they need to help their students reach their higher education goals. These goals can look like different for each student—they may include college, career tech training, military service, or some other type of training after high school.

Show slide eight, which poses the question: "How much is a college degree worth?" Ask families to consider the graphic on slide nine and see what connection they notice. Discuss the graphic, pointing out each level of postsecondary educational (PSE) attainment, the time it takes to get to each level, and the average yearly/lifetime salary for each educational level.

### **Responding To Participants: Exceptions To The Averages**

The graphic is designed to demonstrate that the greater your educational attainment, the more lifetime earnings you will make. Greater educational attainment also reduces, on average, the number of situations where you might be unemployed. Make sure you emphasize that these are averages and that there are some exceptions. For example, there are some great training programs that can be completed in a short period of time and that are high paying.

Briefly go over the various types of postsecondary education on slide 10 to inform parents and students of all the education levels that they might consider pursuing.

# Explain

Student Career Interest Survey (25 to 35 minutes): Tell participants that college and career readiness begins with exploring their child's skills and interests and learning how these relate to potential career choices. Explain that career choices are often based on the student's skills, talents, or interests.

Pass out laptops or Chromebooks for students to use during this part of the presentation. Then, distribute a copy of the Career Interest Survey instructions to each student.

## Facilitator Note: Career Interest Survey Preparation

This section of the presentation gives each student an opportunity to begin a career interest inventory at [okcollegestart.org](http://okcollegestart.org). Students will need to set up an account (or login, if an account already exists) to participate in the survey. Facilitators will need enough charged Chromebooks or laptops for each seventh- or eighth-grade student in attendance. Staff members should also be available to help students troubleshoot any internet access or website issues. If technology or staff are not available, an alternative is to demonstrate how to log on and take this survey at home or at another time at school using the provided handout. The goal is for parents and students to begin a dialog about students' interests and their possible career opportunities.

Show slide 11 and explain how students can create an account at [okcollegestart.org](http://okcollegestart.org). Explain to parents and students that it is important for them to discuss student interests and skills together, as well as how those interests and skills can provide some insight into possible career choices. Guide students slowly through **slides 12-15**. Creating an account should take five minutes and the Career Interest Survey should take 10 to 15 minutes.

After students have completed the Career Interest Survey, display **slide 16**. Students will see the survey results of their two top career interest areas. Move on to **slide 17**. Distribute two of the attached Career Trading Cards to each student.

Instruct students to write their two top career choices on the trading cards. Ask students to add more information about what makes this career choice perfect for them or anything they are not excited about regarding these career choices (**slides 18 and 19**). Career choice exploration and the trading cards activity should take an additional 10 to 15 minutes.

Display **slide 20** and lead a discussion about the results of the survey.

## Extend

Financial Resources (10 minutes): Pass out the Oklahoma's Promise application and the Oklahoma 529 Savings Plan application. Tell parents that in addition to discussing career interests and options with their students, it is important to investigate and plan financial resources now so that money will be ready and available when students graduate from high school. Two resources we will discuss at this event are Oklahoma's Promise (OK Promise) and the Oklahoma 529 Savings Plan (OK 529 Savings Plan).

Show **slide 21** and explain the guidelines for OK Promise. Stress to students and parents that enrollment begins in eighth grade and that OK Promise has parent financial requirements and student academic requirements to remain eligible through graduation. For more information on OK Promise go to their [website](#) (the full URL is also listed in the Resources below). Feel free to add more slides about OK Promise requirements and eligibility if this is an eighth-grade enrollment year.

Display **slide 22** and explain the guidelines for the OK 529 Savings Plan. All families and any family members (such as grandparents or other relatives) can contribute to the OK 529 Savings Plan. The plan provides families an opportunity to contribute tax-free savings now for use later in college. Tax-free savings grow faster and an account can be opened immediately in a student's name by any family member or friend. For more information about the 529 Savings Plan, go [here](#) (full URL is also listed in the Resources below).

**Slide 23** displays more useful websites for students and parents. Point out that there are many parent and student resources for parents and students that can be accessed now and in the future for college and career readiness information and assistance.

## Evaluate

Wrap Up (5 to 7 minutes): Pass out the "I Used to Think... But Now I Know" handout to each family. Explain the directions for the handout, shown on **slide 24**. Note that research indicates college and career readiness should begin in middle school or earlier. Getting good grades, participating in school activities, maintaining good attendance, and investigating career interests through surveys can all help a student prepare for college and career readiness. Parents can support students by setting high academic expectations, helping students maintain good attendance, frequenting their child's school activities, beginning a savings plan, and applying for OK Promise in eighth grade.

Offer assistance in filling out the OK Promise and 529 Savings Plan forms with parents. Thank the families for attending, and allow time for parents to ask any questions. Display **slide 25** so that parents can complete the required GEAR UP Rapid Feedback form.

### **Facilitator's Note: Rapid Feedback Forms**

Please contact your Parent Coordinator to receive the required GEAR UP Rapid Feedback forms.

## Follow-up Activities

Remind parents to look for other events or opportunities at the school this year designed to support families and their students in college and career readiness. Explain how your school will inform parents of these ongoing opportunities. Ask participants to invite other families when future events are announced.



## Research Rationale

Communities in Oklahoma are like other communities in their desire to see more students graduate and pursue post-secondary opportunities. Students who attend college after graduation and complete a four-year degree enjoy greater job satisfaction and better quality of life post graduation, and college graduates have significantly better opportunities for upward career mobility and earning a living wage (Okerson, 2016). The nation, too, benefits from a well educated workforce in competing in global markets (Stewart, 2016; Okerson, 2016; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). By the year 2020, 67% of all Oklahoma jobs will require a college degree or additional post-secondary training and education (Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education [ORHE], 2015b). The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OKSDE, 2016) reported the 2015-16 high school graduation rate as 83%. These graduation rates have remained fairly consistent with the national average for several years (OKSDE, 2016). Trends in college enrollment after high school have not fared as well. Oklahoma's post-secondary institutions have shown a steady decline in college enrollment since 2011 (ORHE, 2015a). The Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education (ORHE, 2015c) reported that only 49% of the state's fall/spring 2015 high school graduates entered Oklahoma colleges and universities. While this percentage does not take into account students who enrolled in out-of-state institutions, a significant gap still exists in Oklahoma between high school graduation rates and college enrollment. In terms of college attainment, Oklahoma ranks 42nd in the nation with only 24% of the population obtaining a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). College and career readiness is a process that begins as early as elementary school, not a program. (King, 2012).

## Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). I used to think . . . but now I know. Strategies. Retrieved from <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f50639f2>
- K20 Center (n.d.) Promotional Videos. English: <https://youtu.be/CNco-6WMrvM> Spanish: <https://youtu.be/APCSXBngPdk>
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- Okerson, J. R. (2016). Beyond the campus tour: College choice and the campus visit (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://publish.wm.edu/etd/1463413085>
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- Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education. (2015b). Degrees of progress: 2015 annual report. Retrieved from: <http://www.okhighered.org/studies-reports/annual-report/annual-report2015.pdf>
- Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education. (2015c). High school to college-going rates for Oklahoma high school graduates to Oklahoma colleges. Retrieved from <http://www.okhighered.org/studies-reports/preparation/CollegeGoingRates/CollegeRate2014.shtml>
- Oklahoma State Department of Education. (2016). High school graduation rates. Retrieved from <http://sde.ok.gov/sde/documents/2015-09-25/oklahoma-public-school-graduation-rates>
- Stewart, P. (2016). Great expectations. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 33(24), 16-17.
- United States Census Bureau. (2015). Quick facts Oklahoma: Bachelor's degree or higher, persons 25 years +. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/EDU685215/40>
- Venezia, A. & Jaeger, L. (2013). Transitions from high school to college. *The Future of Children*, 23(1), 117-136.