

Step to the Top of the Class

This activity helps students understand how the choices they make in high school can impact their future.



Instructions for this activity are below. Click on the video to the left to see the activity in action.

Instructions

1. Print student pages, so that the page with only the number “1” has the “#1 in the middle school” class page on the reverse side of the same sheet of paper. Also, print the Student Scenarios page.

2. Use the following script to guide students through this activity. Bolded font is intended for the educator to read out loud; italicized font is educator instructions.

We’re going to do an activity that highlights what colleges & scholarship providers are looking for in students. I need 10 volunteers – and the first volunteer should be a strong, loud reader.

Ask educator to select 9 other volunteers – hand them their number and scenario sheet as they come to the front of the room.

Volunteers, please line up in numerical order, with number 1 at the far left of the room. Then show the class your number.

Hand “Scenarios” page to the first volunteer and learn their name. Quietly tell him/her they will read the characteristics and say “up” when there is a plus on their sheet, and say “down” when there is a minus on their sheet. Demonstrate an example.

Imagine it’s the end of 8th grade year. These students are about to enter high school. They are currently standing in class rank order, from highest to lowest, based on how they (fictionally) placed academically at the end of their 8th grade year. But colleges & scholarship providers look at more than just grades.

Our volunteers each have a short list of decisions they will make over the next four years. *Student name* will read the decisions and ask you to move “up” (to your right) or “down” (to your left) the ranks a certain number of spots. When your decision is read, please make the move (for example, “move up two” means move two spots to your right). *(pause for student understanding)*

I’ll interrupt us along the way and ask you to consider why actions have certain consequences.

Read scenarios and guide students to move, as needed. Ask reflective questions throughout: Why might it help to have a summer volunteer job?, etc. Order of students at the end of the simulation should be: 8,4,7,5,9,1,6,2, but it’s ok if not exact. When finished going through all the qualities or you’re running short on time...

Now it’s close to senior year graduation. And you’ve seen how the ranks have changed. This is how colleges or scholarship providers might rank these students.

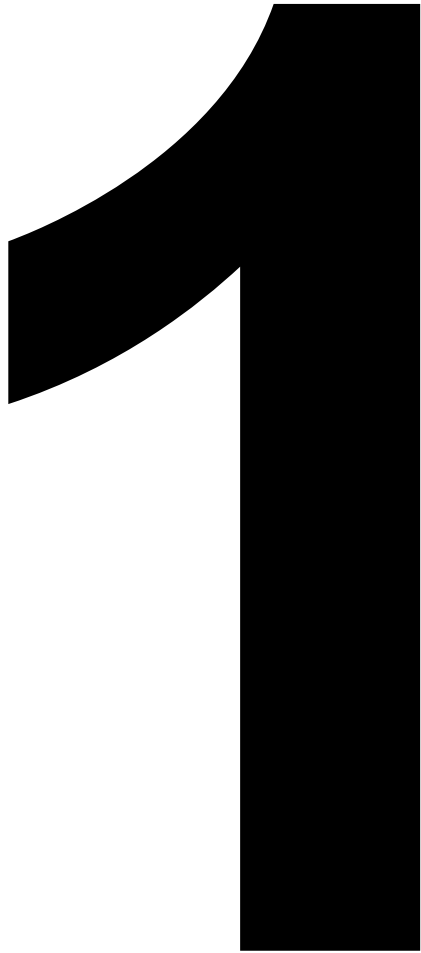
- **What were some common negative choices?** (being lazy)
- **What were some common positive choices?** (plan to take difficult classes, study regularly, get involved in activities, save what you can for college, get a team of supporters in place to help you get to college)
- **What kind of student do colleges & scholarship providers want?**

Grades are important, but they aren’t everything when it comes to preparing for college. Thanks to our volunteers – please hand me your pages on your way back to your seat.

Activity adapted from [NACAC’S Step by Step Middle School Curriculum](#)

Student Scenarios – Step to the Top of the Class

- a. If you plan to take at least 4 years of English and Math, a common college admissions requirement +2 (student 7)
- b. If you take sick days from school, even when you aren't sick -2 (student 5)
- c. If you plan to get involved in sports or musical activities +1 (student 3)
- d. If you focus more on athletics than grades, and just learned only 2% of students earn athletic scholarships -3 (student 4)
- e. If you are struggling with a family issue that gets in the way of studying BUT receive help +1 (student 8)
- f. If instead of studying for your test, you copied off your neighbor's paper, sit down your just failed an important class you needed for college admissions (student 3)
- g. If you asked your favorite teacher for a letter of recommendation for college admission +2 (student 5)
- h. If your lack of time management results in poor grades -2 (student 6)
- i. If you spend more time on your phone than on homework -4 (student 2)
- j. If you talk to your family about how you want to go to college and have their support +2 (student 8, 4)
- k. If you post a picture of yourself to social media in an inappropriate setting -3 (student 1)
- l. If you got behind in one of your classes but stayed after school to get extra help +2 (student 9)
- m. If in the summer, you get a volunteer job, like coaching a youth team +2 (student 6)
- n. If you use EducationQuest resources to research a plan for college +1 (student 1)



#1 in class:

- If you post a picture of yourself to social media in an inappropriate setting
- If you use EducationQuest resources to research a plan for college

2

#2 in class:

- If you spend more time on your phone than on homework

3

#3 in class:

- If you plan to get involved in sports or musical activities
- If instead of studying for your test, you copied off your neighbor's paper

4

#4 in class:

- If you focus more on athletics than grades, and just learned only 2% of students earn athletic scholarships
- If you talk to your family about how you want to go to college and have their support

5

#5 in class:

- If you take sick days from school, even when you aren't sick
- If you ask your favorite teacher for a letter of recommendation for college admission

6

#6 in class:

- If your lack of time management results in poor grades
- If in the summer, you get a volunteer job, like coaching a youth team

7

#7 in class:

- If you plan to take at least 4 years of English and Math, a common college admissions requirement

8

#8 in class

- If you are struggling with a family issue that gets in the way of studying BUT receive help
- If you talk to your family about how you want to go to college and have their support

9

#9 in class:

- If you got behind in one of your classes but stayed after school to get extra help