

## What is College?

### Lesson 1: What is College?

Adopted from lesson plans created by Jennifer Raeder for the San Francisco Unified School District's Kindergarten to College Program.

**Objective:** Students will understand that there are many different levels of education that people attain in order to learn and prepare for careers.

#### **Materials:**

- Poster paper for making a timeline with Markers
- Photos of kids at different stages in life (toddler, preschool, elementary, etc.)
- Photos of different types of schools (elementary, middle, high, and college)
- Graduation cap and gown, or photo of a person wearing these items
- High school or College Degree
- "Someday, I Will Be a Graduate" worksheet (see Lesson 1 Resources)

**Key Vocabulary:** graduate, elementary school, middle school, high school, college, university

#### Lesson Outline

If you are able to obtain a graduation cap and gown, show these things to the class (for fun, you could even wear them!). As an alternative, show the class a picture of a person wearing a cap and gown. Ask students if any of them have an idea about why and when people wear outfits like this one.

Explain that this is an outfit that people wear when they *graduate* from a school. When a person graduates, that means that he or she worked very hard at the school for a long time, and now they have finished their learning at that school. They wear the cap and gown to celebrate all the work that they did and all the things they learned. People and their families feel very proud when someone graduates from a school. Explain that when someone graduates, that doesn't mean that they have finished learning. They may go on to another school, or they may start working at a job where they continue to learn new skills and information.

At the edge of chart paper, begin making a timeline. (See Lesson 1 Resources) Draw or paste a picture of a baby and small child onto the timeline. Write "0- 4 years old" above the pictures and note "preschool".

Write "5 years old." Explain that when most kids are around 5 years old, they start kindergarten. Show the students a picture of a five-year-old, and paste it on the timeline, or draw a child on the timeline. Under the child, write "Kindergarten." Put a bright yellow star above this stage to show that this is the stage that the students are in now.

Ask students if they know what they will do when they finish kindergarten. Some will know that they will go to first grade. Continue the timeline, illustrating elementary school, middle school, and high school. Ask the class if they know anyone (siblings, cousins, family friends) who is going to one of these types of schools. Describe these schools and how they are similar and different from each other and ask students what they know about these types of schools.

At the end of high school, paste or draw a picture of a person in a cap and gown. Explain that it is very important for people to work hard and to finish and graduate from high school, because during high school they learn so many important things that will help them be happy adults. Also say that it is important to graduate from high school so that you can go to college.

As you add college to the timeline, explain that going to a college or university is very different from other types of schools. For example, people are adults when they begin college, not kids. Also, people often move away from the city or area where they grew up in order to go to college. Another important difference is that going to college costs a lot of money, which is why people start saving for college a long time before they are ready to go. At the end of college, paste another picture of someone in a different color cap and gown. Emphasize the fact that people work very hard and learn new skills by going to college, and again, that people and their families feel very proud when someone graduates from college.

Have the students imagine themselves when they are much older, and are about to graduate. Have them draw their older selves on the "Someday, I will be a Graduate" worksheet.

Display the timeline in the classroom, and refer to it often as you do other activities around college.

### **“What is College” Extensions Activities:**

- Share from your own experiences in college.
- Ask students to “interview” someone in their own lives who has gone to college. (See Lesson 1 Resources for homework assignment)
- Bring in guest speakers (including parents and your own friends) to do a show-and-tell about their career and how college helped them.
- Take a fieldtrip to one of the local colleges and universities.
- Take a virtual fieldtrip (online tour) to a featured college, or share photos and facts you gathered about the college from the internet.
- Contact the admissions offices of local colleges and universities and request brochures about the school.
- Invite a college student to do a show-and-tell about their experiences in college. (What are they learning? What are they studying to be? What did they do to prepare, financially and otherwise? What advice do they have for students right now?)
- Set up a “Career Day,” where students go in small groups from station to station. At each station, an adult does a “show-and-tell” about their careers. (Make sure the adults mention that they had to work hard in school and go to college in order to be able to do what they do.)