

# **AVOID COURSE REMORSE**

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## A NIGHTMARE WAITING TO HAPPEN

*[Nikki wakes up breathing really fast with sweat pouring down her face. After realizing it was another nightmare, she is very thankful that it was just that – a nightmare. She quickly reaches for her telephone and calls her friend Phoebe to tell her about the nightmare.]*

**Nikki:** Hey girl, I had that nightmare again! I've heard stories about kids finding out in their senior year that they didn't take the right courses or that they didn't earn enough credits to graduate. That is so scary! Ever since I heard those stories, I've had nightmares about graduating. In my dream I just walk across the stage and shake the principal's hand and I'm all excited. Then, when I walk back to my seat and sit down, I open the diploma and it says that I have three more credits to earn to get my diploma. Girl, you know how much that upset me!

**Phoebe:** I hear ya. Unfortunately, almost 1 out of 3 kids drops out of Indiana's high schools. This is a nightmare that is waiting to happen for too many of us. I overheard my counselor explaining that dropping out doesn't just happen overnight. Instead, it's a gradual process where students begin to feel overwhelmed by their courses, feel like they are way behind academically, feel bored, or just don't have anyone to encourage them to stay in school.

I wish my sister was here to help me out. My dad works hard and wants me to do well in school even though he doesn't take much time to help. I know he cares, but he didn't go to college and says he's not smart enough to help me. I hear so many adults saying that they wish they had taken high school or college more seriously. Many of them turned out just fine, but in the back of their minds, they wonder if they would have done better if they would have tried harder or pushed themselves. I don't want to end up like that.



**Nikki:** Yeah, I know what you mean. It may be tough, but we have to overcome the odds and take education seriously. We have to take all of the right courses not just to graduate but to get into college. It's important to get with our high school counselors and make sure we get the right information. It's their job to make sure that we are on track. Jamal has already started helping me out. I'll follow up soon with my counselor, Mrs. Brown. Anyway, girl, thanks for listening to me. I'll check back with you a little later. Bye now.



## INDIANA'S EDUCATION PIPELINE: HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE COMPLETION

Of every 100 Indiana 9th graders:



70 students graduate from high school



44 of these students enter college



32 of these are still enrolled sophomore year

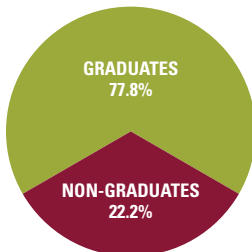


23 of these graduate within six years



Source: National Center for Educational Management Systems, 2008

## 2007-08 INDIANA GRADUATION GAP High School Graduates Within Four Years



Source: Indiana Department of Education

# JAMAL RECOMMENDS THE CAREER & COURSE PLANNER

**Jamal:** Let's go over the Career and Course Planner (formerly called Indiana's Guidance Portfolio). You know you should have completed this by now. It's a great tool to develop your Core 40 career and course plans. My mom and I went over it a lot. It took more than a day to complete it. You should spend some time on it and give serious attention to your courses and career plans. You can download the planner by simply visiting the



Learn More Indiana website at [www.learnmoreindiana.org](http://www.learnmoreindiana.org). I recommend that all students complete this by the ninth grade or as soon as possible.

Completing the Career and Course Planner makes you think about your career or your goals. Although I tell everyone I know to aim for the Core 40 Diploma with Honors, I realize that college isn't for everyone. If you do not plan to attend college, make sure you are basing your decision on the right reasons. Some students feel scared or think they are behind and it is too late.

It is NEVER too late! There are lots of resources and programs out there to help you succeed and to stay on track. Just ask your counselor. There's no question that a college degree will have an impact on the quality of your life.

Follow my motto, the triple E – Eliminate Excuses and Excel.

## **IN GENERAL, MORE EDUCATION MEANS MORE MONEY, GREATER EMPLOYMENT AND BETTER JOB SECURITY**

**On average, a college degree is worth an extra \$23,000 a year.**

- College graduates made an average of \$51,554 in 2004. Those with advanced degrees made \$78,093.
  - Adults with a high school diploma made \$28,645
  - High school dropouts averaged \$19,169
- Seventy-five percent of future jobs are likely to want employees with at least a license or certificate.
- Occupations that require a bachelor's degree are projected to grow the fastest, nearly twice as fast as the national average for all occupations.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor and Census Bureau

# CHALLENGE YOURSELF TO MAINTAIN A HIGH GRADE POINT AVERAGE

**Phoebe:** I'm glad we're all friends and it helps that we're neighbors too. We get to help each other out with all sorts of stuff. My older sister Ellen lives in another state and I miss her a lot. She used to help me with school and teach me about clothes, hair and make-up, and boys too! Anyway, I'm glad we get to study together and compare notes. The grades we get are ways to measure our comprehension or how much we have learned. For instance, an "A" usually means "excellent" and a "D" usually means "needs improvement."

GPA's (Grade Point Averages) are used by colleges and employers to size up and compare applicants. You should strive for the highest GPA to not only increase your chances of going to college and getting a scholarship, but also because it demonstrates accomplishment and shows that you are taking your education seriously.

**Jamal:** Too many of my friends mistakenly believe that they can take "easy" classes to boost their GPAs so that they will stand out for college. This is a mistake. Most colleges recalculate our GPAs and come up with an "Academic GPA".

For instance, some colleges may not include courses like Physical Education, Typing or

Home Economics because they don't fall within their required coursework. Colleges usually consider courses that fall under the following areas: English, Social Studies, Math, Science and Foreign Languages. Sometimes, they will also consider challenging courses in the Arts or other areas as well. The point is that you can have a 4.0 GPA but if you do not take certain classes that show a college admissions counselor that you are academically prepared, your chances of getting into college may be slim or none at all.

Many of my sophomore friends ask how they can get their GPAs up because they did not have a strong freshman year. I usually tell them to



focus on the basics – (1) get organized, (2) do all of your homework, (3) take good notes in class, (4) study, and (5) get a tutor if you really need one.



**Phoebe:** *[Organization and Homework]* That's so true, Jamal. I carry a course planner so that I can write all of my assignments down. That way, I won't lose my homework assignments. I also make sure that I turn in all of my homework. In a lot of classes, teachers do not even grade the assignment, but they will give you automatic credit for turning the homework in. There is no excuse for not doing homework. This is the easiest part of your course work.

If you are having problems with your homework, contact the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology's Homework Hotline at 1-877-ASK-ROSE. They will help you with math and science homework for free between the hours of 7:00 PM and 10:00 PM. If the homework is in another subject other than math and science, ask your parents, teacher (if it's not too late), relatives or friends for help.

**Jamal:** *[Good Class Notes]* Taking good notes in class will not only help you with your homework but it will also help you better comprehend the subject and earn better grades on exams. We all know that the way to comprehend math formulas and equations is through repetition – completing a large number of math problems until you master the concept and are comfortable. In my math classes, I write down the example problems in class, learn all the steps and use my notes to solve other problems. I also use the same concept for my other classes. I take thorough notes on what my teacher seems to like and emphasizes in class. Then, at home I study my class notes and my other notes from my textbook outlines. Taking really good notes really will help you earn better grades on exams.



**Nikki:** *[Study Time and Tutors]* Yeah, you guys are right. Besides doing homework and taking good notes, you have to study. Many people think that doing homework is studying, but it's not. You should read each chapter in your textbooks and develop a study habit that will help you retain and comprehend the material. For some students, outlining the text helps. For others, creating flashcards helps them remember the material. Many students form study groups with classmates to help them with the material. Others find tutors to help them one-on-one. You need to find out what works best for you, but the key is to seek help if you need it. Don't be shy. Let your teacher and parents know when you need help. Utilizing study time and tutors is great preparation for college. It's your life.

## MAKING THE GRADE

Please take time to grade yourself in the following course areas (CA) by entering a grade of A (4.00), A- (3.67), B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), C+ (2.33), C (2.00), D (1.00), or F (0.00):

- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA1:** Time spent on helping child with homework.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA 2:** Time spent on checking grades and comments on child's homework assignments, tests or quizzes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA3:** Time spent on helping child develop good study habits and schedule.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA4:** Time spent on communicating with teachers about grades and homework via email, phone or school's software program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA5:** Time spent talking to child about academic, college and career goals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA6:** Time spent on helping child with course schedule.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA7:** Time spent on meeting or talking to counselor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA8:** Time spent on volunteering at school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA9:** Time spent on learning about different CORE 40 Diploma requirements.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA10:** Time spent each semester talking to teachers about child's progress and success.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA11:** Time spent on encouraging child to participate in extracurricular activities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA12:** Time spent on helping child prepare for SAT and/or ACT Test and GQE.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA13:** Time serving as a role model or seeking out relative or friend to mentor child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA14:** Time spent preparing breakfast for child, especially the morning of important exams.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **CA15:** Time spent on talking to child about social issues like bullying, Internet, drinking, and drugs.

If any of the course areas do not apply to your situation, please write "N/A" in the space. Provide the numerical numbers for each grade. Add up the total and divide the total by the number of course areas graded (do not count those with "N/A" responses). For example, if you received the following scores below, you would calculate your scores like this:  $39.34/15 = 2.62$ :

<b>CA1</b> = 4.00	<b>CA4</b> = 3.67	<b>CA7</b> = 1.00	<b>CA10</b> = 3.00	<b>CA13</b> = 1.00
<b>CA2</b> = 4.00	<b>CA5</b> = 2.00	<b>CA8</b> = 1.00	<b>CA11</b> = 3.67	<b>CA14</b> = 3.00
<b>CA3</b> = 2.67	<b>CA6</b> = 2.67	<b>CA9</b> = 3.33	<b>CA12</b> = 2.33	<b>CA15</b> = 2.00

(4.00 + 4.00 + 2.67 + 3.67 + 2.00 + 2.67 + 1.00 + 1.00 + 3.33 + 3.00 + 3.67 + 2.33 + 1.00 + 3.00 + 2.00) Take the sum of the scores, which is 39.34, and divide by 15 (number of course areas scored) equals an overall score of 2.62 (almost a B-).

How well did you do? Regardless of your GPA, the good news is that you can repeat the course and improve your performance. Your child needs you to be involved and right now is the time to do it.

## ABOUT IBE'S YOUNGSTARS AND ITS READ, THINK & SPEAK INITIATIVE



**From left to right:** Phoebe, Rico, Lil' Nate, Autumn, Jamal, Nikki

IBE's *Read, Think & Speak Initiative* is one of the many efforts of the organization to help close the academic achievement gap for minority, educationally-disadvantaged and impoverished youth in grades K-12. Through its book series, empowerment conferences and membership in the YoungSTARS Club, IBE will encourage students and parents to not only “**read**” and “**think**” through problems, homework and assignments, but to also “think” about their lives and to make good choices. Students and parents will also be encouraged to “**speak up**” and become strong advocates for their destiny and for the destiny of millions of other children around the world.

**For more information about the initiative, visit [www.indianablackexpo.com](http://www.indianablackexpo.com)**