How Parents Can Help Their Students Launch into Life After High School

Loudoun County Public Schools
Department of Student Services
Student Assistance Specialists
Kevin Grigsby & Suchita Palit
Parent Workshop – April 28, 2022

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Who We Are

Student Assistance Specialists (SAS) are a team of mental health professionals who provide intervention and prevention services to students and families within LCPS. SASs support students through education, counseling and referrals that support students with needs relating to substance use and mental health.

- Kevin Grigsby – Riverside High School Cluster
- Suchita Palit – Stone Bridge High School Cluster
What is the role of a director of operations?

Directors of operations are responsible for everything from negotiations, budgeting, and purchasing. They’re especially skilled at developing long-term operational strategies, working closely with senior management to meet company objectives.
Director of Operations

Qualifications:

You will frequently take on the duties of a...

- Nurse
- Financial Advisor
- Counselor
- Disciplinarian
- Police Officer
- Fire Fighter
- Teacher
- Spiritual Advisor
- Mediator
- Professional Advocate
- Lawyer
- Practitioner of Patience
- Coach
- Cheerleader
**Work Hours**: 24/7

**Salary**: $0.00 in monetary compensation—In fact, this position may result in you spending tens and hundreds of dollars of your own funds.

**Car Insurance**: Your car insurance will increase significantly!

**Utilities (phone, cable, etc)**: Spending toward utilities will increase.

**Leave Benefits**: No sick leave, no holidays, no annual leave

**DISCLAIMER**: Once you accept this position, you will have this title FOR LIFE!
What is this amazing job called?

PARENT
Workshop Focus

**Post-Graduate Paths**
- College /Continuing Education
- Gap Year
- Workforce
- Military

**Post-Pandemic Impact**
- The pandemic’s effect on preparedness for life after high school.

**Emerging Adult**
- What does that look like for high school students?
- What are appropriate expectations?

**Social & Emotional Support**
- Skills students and families can benefit from
- Signs to look out for and resources to strengthen natural support systems.
- Caregiver Self Care
Some steps to help your child prepare for different post graduate paths.

1 – **Build up your child’s self-advocacy skills.** It’s important for children to have a strong sense of self including strengths, abilities, interests, values. Those attributes make them unique. You need to show them how those qualities can translate into the workplace, or the community, or furthering their educational career. Your child needs to be able to explain that to others. Being able to advocate for themselves will help them take on responsibilities at work or even help to transition into independent living.

2 – **Expand support networks.** We’ve all heard “it takes a village to raise a child.” Why limit this concept to children? We all need a strong support system and building your child’s will help them find others to lean on, learn from and build friendships and relationships of their own. Parents may feel a bit uncomfortable allowing their child to develop new relationships, but building natural relationships and friendships is very important for all young adults.

3 – **It’s never too early to start building a resume.** Your child’s is going to look very different than the traditional resume’ you may be thinking of. Volunteer activities, part-time jobs, the ability to show potential employers their abilities, initiative and dedication through the completion of tasks and activities. Use your circle of friends, family and other social organizations to find summer jobs or volunteer opportunities.

4 – **Enhancing interpersonal skills.** These are skills that are necessary to interact day-to-day in the workforce. These could be accepting direction or guidance, being on time, handling conflict, making decisions with confidence, and engaging an appropriate communication. It could also include how to dress for the workplace, asking for help, what to do when you’re sick. Many of these “rules” are unspoken, but for someone who may have issues with social behaviors, sometimes these need to be outlined.

5 – **Money Management.** Children can benefit from learning about finances. It is important to educate your child on managing their money. Developing skills through saving, spending, gift giving, and budgeting can build self-determination. Parents can help by opening accounts for their child and taking them to the bank to deposit their allowance, paychecks, or that birthday money a grandparent sends. Show your child how to use the ledger in your checkbook, ATM cards, and how to be accountable for paying bills and managing their accounts.

6 – **Get ready for change.** Preparing your child for changes to come and helping to guide them through challenges along the way will help them be successful. Help them to figure out next steps when needing to make decisions and recovering from a mistake. You will be able to help them establish values and guidelines and prepare for the next steps.
Post-Graduate Path: College/Continuing Education

Planning & Preparing

- Discuss various options of continuing educational paths - traditional 4-year college, community college, vocational schools, etc. College isn’t and does not have to be a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Keeping track of important dates/summer orientation sessions
- Realistic Budgeting
- Have students follow up with school counselors and/or career specialists regarding pending documentation.
- Financial Aid
- Basic Life Skills - Cooking, cleaning, basic first-aid, etc.
- Effective Communication
"I would hazard to say that there is at least as much educational value in an international or domestic gap year experience as there is in a freshman year of college," says Ethan Knight, executive director and founder of the Oregon-based nonprofit Gap Year Association.

- Typically, high school students travel, volunteer, and focus on personal growth during a gap year.

- Help student determine the purpose of this gap.

- Explore post-secondary choices and options available to students - encourage check-in with college and career specialists for support with planning and information about events.

- Work/Life Balance skills

- Time Management Skills
Post-Graduate Path: Workforce
Utilizing School Based Services and Tools

- Naviance Student
  - Access to short assessments that help students discover careers that match interests.
  - Additional information about careers, training needs, and outlook.
  - Students can search for colleges by name or use the SuperMatch tool to find schools that match needs (such as location, size and major)

- Scholarships
  - National
    - Higher dollar amount
    - More competition
    - Easily searchable through Google
  - Local
    - Fewer applicants/less competitive

- Career Center + Career Specialist
  - Helps with career exploration, college searches, scholarships and more!

- Transition Teacher
Post-Pandemic Impact

- Adjustments made to accommodate continued learning throughout the pandemic.
  - Reduced interpersonal interactions
  - Increase in screen time
  - Isolation
  - Impact on sleep hygiene
- Mental health
- Substance Use and Misuse
Social & Emotional Support

Mental Health Struggles

• 30 – 45% of adolescents and young adults with mental health disorders have a co-occurring substance use disorder
  ❑ Many of the signs and symptoms of mental health illness and substance misuse are overlapping – and can feed into one another.
  ❑ Untreated co-occurring disorders increase risk of self-harm.
  ❑ Identifying risk factors and protective strategies early on can help prevent or treat these problems with best outcomes.

How Parents Can Support Struggling Students

• Encourage treatment participation and support with options and inclusion in treatment planning
  • Familiarize yourself and family with treatment options.
  • Collaborate with trusted supports.
  • Utilize resources and recommendations provided through school UMHTs.
• Strengthen natural supports.
• Know warning signs of relapse for both mental health and substance misuse so you can intervene early to provide additional support when your child needs it.
Substance Misuse and How it Impacts the Emerging Adult

When a young person uses drugs, their delicate balance of neurotransmitters is lost, and the reward pathways of the brain are altered. For example, many drugs unnaturally deplete the brain’s production of dopamine, serotonin and endorphins (the chemicals that produce happiness and pleasure). As a result, drugs cause the brain to reward the person for taking drugs – and not for healthy eating, sleeping, healthy social interaction and other vital aspects of life. If these reward pathways of the brain continue to be altered due to repeated drug use, effects on a young person’s wellbeing can be overwhelming and long-lasting. Drugs can also permanently change the brain’s prefrontal cortex.
Launching vs Learning to Fly
Growing a Grown-up Brain

Scientists have long thought that the human brain was formed in early childhood. But by scanning children’s brains with an MRI year after year, they discovered that the brain undergoes radical changes in adolescence. Excess gray matter is pruned out, making brain connections more specialized and efficient. The parts of the brain that control physical movement, vision, and the senses mature first, while the regions in the front that control higher thinking don’t finish the pruning process until the early 20s.

**Gray matter density**

- **More dense**
- **Less dense**

**Source:** “Dynamic mapping of human cortical development during childhood through early adulthood,” Nitin Gupta et al., Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, May 25, 2004; California Institute of Technology
“Emerging Adulthood” is a term used to describe a period of development spanning from about ages 18 to 29, experienced by most people in their twenties in Westernized cultures and perhaps in other parts of the world as well. It was initially defined by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, PhD from Clark University in 2000. Arnett has studied this age group extensively since then, focusing on understanding the timing and consequences of transitional events like:

- Leaving home
- Finishing education
- Finding employment
- Getting married
- Starting a family
- Redefining relationships with parents
- Pursuing love lives
- Shaping a career path
- Developing religious beliefs
- Having hopes for the future
“The Emerging Adult”

- **Identity exploration** answering the question “who am I?” and trying out various options, especially in love and work
- **Instability** in love, work, and place of residence
- **Self-Focus** as obligations to others reach a lifespan low
- **Feeling “In-Between”** in transition, neither adolescent nor adult
- **Possibilities/Optimism** when hopes flourish and people have unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives
“I’m an adult now, I got this…”

Some challenges facing emerging adults

- Managing stress relating to transitions (i.e. end of high school, college, adulting)
- Struggle to establish independence
- Appropriate management of medication and overall medical care
- Sleep hygiene
- Nutrition
- Daily living activities
- Healthy relationships
Some steps to help your child prepare for emerging adulthood.

- Foster independence in small ways, especially when they’re under your roof.
  - The number of Americans ages 25–29 living with parents is the highest it’s been in 75 years.
- Listen more, talk less, and don’t judge.
- Believe in their greatness (especially when they don’t).
- Enjoy them.
- Model a healthy lifestyle.
Caregiver Needs

- **Mistakes are a fact of life. It is the response to the error that counts.** – Nikki Giovanni
What’s next for you (Parents):

1. Volunteer/Become a mentor
2. Travel
3. Expand your culinary skills
4. Declutter your spaces
5. Rekindle or start hobbies
6. Adopt a pet
7. Put pen to paper/fingers to a keyboard
8. Start a blog
9. Plant a garden
10. Turn hobbies into a business
11. Take time for self-care & relaxation
12. Focus on your health
13. Keep a gratitude journal
14. Invite someone or people over for dinner
15. Connect on social media
16. Deepen your spiritual practice
17. Learn a new language
18. Get moving about
19. Update your wardrobe or go retro
20. Change up your beauty routine
21. Become more tech savvy
22. Take on DIY projects around the house
23. Establish a new relationship with your child
25. Singles: Step back into the dating scene
26. Continue your education
27. Nurture your friendships
28. Meet a financial advisor
29. Connect with extended family
30. Read a book
Resources

SAS Guide to Finding Treatment Services
https://www.smore.com/1uxwr

SAMHSA Treatment Locator

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
https://chadd.org/for-parents/overview/

Mental Health First Aid Course
https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/find-a-course/
Thank you
How to find us with questions:

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https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf

https://docs.iza.org/dp14797.pdf

https://www.gapyearassociation.org/