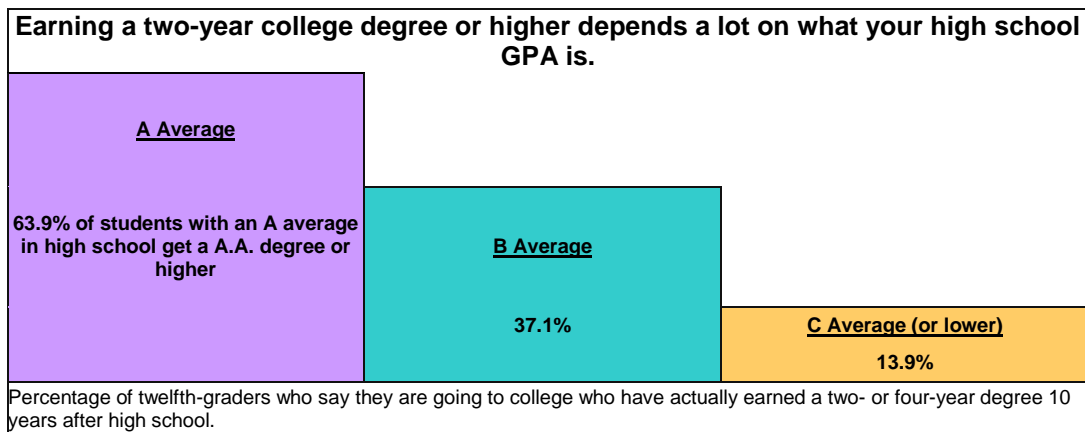


What You Need To Do in High School If You Want To Graduate from College

Let's start by getting the cold, hard truth out in the open: Less than 40 percent of students who plan to go to college actually earn a two- or four-year degree within 10 years of graduating from high school (Rosenbaum, 2001). Do you know what it takes to succeed in college? The simple answer is that if you take hard classes, do all of your homework, and get good grades in high school, you will be ready.

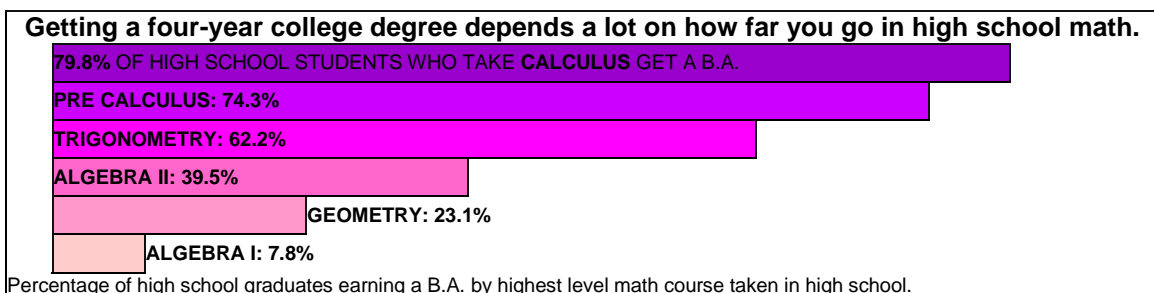
1. GRADES MATTER. Your high school grade point average is a great predictor of whether or not you will earn a college degree. Take a look at the chart (below). Less than 14 percent of students with C averages or lower in high school earned a two- or four-year college degree. Even worse, 52 percent of college students who had a C average (or lower) in high school didn't earn even one college credit! What are they doing while they are "in college"? They are spending time and money on remedial classes that repeat high school work and earn no college credit.



Even if you don't go to college, your high school grade point average is still important because it predicts future income. High-school grades do not predict income right after high school, but they do strongly predict long-term income. If you don't go to college, an increase of one letter grade (from C to B) in your high school grade-point average typically increases income by 13 percent by age 28! (Compared to people who haven't gone to college, a four year degree typically increases income by about 14 percent.) So even if you don't go to college, improving your high school grades from Cs to Bs improves the chances that you will be able to support a family.

2. HOMEWORK MATTERS. Homework might seem like a waste of time, but it teaches you content, time-management, and discipline--all of which you'll need in college. Forty-four percent of high school seniors do less than three hours of homework in a week; only 14 percent of seniors do more than 10 hours. But homework time strongly predicts college success: Over half the students who do more than 10 hours of homework a week will get a four-year college degree; only about 16 percent of those doing less than three hours of homework a week will earn a bachelor's degree.

3. MATH COURSES MATTER. The further you go in math in high school, the better your chances of earning a college degree. Look closely at the chart (below). Completing Algebra II (or a higher course) is a huge help in earning a college degree. And if you really want a bachelor's degree, you better go as high as you can in math while you're still in high school.



Sources: James Rosenbaum (2001) Beyond College for All; Clifford Adelman (1999) Answers in the Toolbox.