

# EDUCATION & CAREER PLAN (ECP) QUICK GUIDE FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

MAXIMIZING YOUR ECP EXPERIENCE





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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

4

ECP Overview

9

Resources  
Roadmap

10

Recommendations  
for Success



## ECP QUICK GUIDE FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The following guide has been designed just for you—a student looking for a way to maximize your journey to college and career readiness. To help you do that, FHI 360 has developed an easy-to-use tool called the **Education & Career Plan (ECP)**. This is a digital resource you can use for all your exploration and planning needs. There are four versions of the ECP designed to support students in different paths (high school, certificate program, 2-year college, or 4-year college or university). You should use the High School ECP in partnership with your **Navigators**—the people in your life who help you with your college and career planning. Navigators can include parents, teachers, counselors, advisors, or any other adults helping you navigate your path.

Below are the four versions of the ECP guides, beginning with the one that is the focus of this document.



### High School ECP

This ECP is designed for students in grades 9–12. Additional resources and information pertaining to postsecondary applications, testing, and financial aid are also included.



### Certificate ECP

This ECP is designed for students enrolled in a certificate program.



### 2-Year College ECP

This ECP is designed for students who are enrolled in a 2-year technical or community college. It includes information and resources related to 2-year plans, resources, and considerations for transfer.



### 4-Year College or University ECP

This ECP is designed for students enrolled in a 4-year college or university. Like the 2-year plan, this version includes information for course planning and career exploration, as well as campus resources and other organizational tools.





## EDUCATION & CAREER PLAN (ECP) OVERVIEW

### What, Exactly, Is The ECP?

The Education & Career Plan (ECP) is a shared tool that helps you integrate college- and career-readiness activities and successes in one organized document. The **High School ECP** consists of four sections that focus on: (1) goal setting, (2) academic progress and accomplishments, (3) career exploration, and (4) postsecondary readiness. You will learn more about each section as you read further in this guide.

The ECP is a **live document** that should be shared with the essential or main Navigator(s) in your life. As a student, you will have a main Navigator (most likely at school), but you may also have a family member or afterschool teacher or coach who serves as an additional Navigator(s). It is important to work with your main Navigator, with input from others as you find helpful, and update your ECP regularly—at least twice a year—to reflect your accomplishments and changing goals. You should be ready to talk about your ECP whenever meeting with your main Navigator. Also, be sure to make use of the Additional Reading & References section of the ECP and the Resources Roadmap provided. There, you will find additional resources and helpful links to use as you learn about and navigate postsecondary planning and requirements.

Once you get started, you will see that the ECP is a tool to help you plan and track your progress toward college and career readiness. By connecting college and career plans, the ECP can help you:

- Identify your career interests and goals
- Connect your career goals with specific qualifications, education, and training required for entry into that career
- Outline a course plan for high school that helps you meet your postsecondary education and career goals
- Record your activities and accomplishments in both college readiness and career readiness

### Getting Started

The first step in working on your ECP is to identify a Navigator (or more than one) that you are comfortable having with you along on this journey for support and advice. For many of you, identifying a Navigator will be a natural process. Perhaps you have built a relationship with a teacher, a school counselor, or coach or some kind—either in or out of school. Any of these people (or others) could support you as a Navigator. But it's essential that your main Navigator be someone you are comfortable with and can have open and honest conversations. It should be someone you can communicate freely with and who can listen without judgement, while providing constructive support and feedback. **Navigators do not need to be experts in college and career planning.** Rather, they must be supportive and understand the value of passing down the lessons they have learned throughout the years—whether through working with young people in some capacity, by applying to and attending college themselves, or by gaining seasoned experience through any variety of careers. In short, you are looking for an individual who is as invested in your personal growth and success as you are.

Now that you know the qualities and characteristics of a valuable Navigator, you may be asking yourself, “How do I identify the right person to ask for this significant role? And how do I establish a strong relationship with them?” We can help you! The following are quick tips for choosing a Navigator.

- Identify someone you feel you can establish a trusting relationship with. You are looking for someone who will look out for your best interests.
- Look for honesty. You will do yourself a disservice if you select someone who will sugarcoat things and tell you what you *want* to hear—rather someone who will tell you what you *need* to hear. You want a Navigator who will challenge you to improve, will deliver real advice and feedback, and who isn’t afraid to ask some of the tougher questions.
- Look for common ground; someone you can relate to and who can relate to you. Perhaps you have the same organizational skills, motivation, extracurricular interests, or philosophical beliefs.
- Identify someone who can help answer your questions. This does not mean they need to have all the answers themselves. A Navigator can answer questions either directly by drawing on their own experiences, or by using their networks and resources, or by suggesting an appropriate referral or connection.
- Think about your goals and the skills and knowledge needed to reach them. Identify someone around you who exemplifies the assets you wish to acquire.
- If you have a particular career path in mind, it may be helpful to identify someone either in that field or who has networks and can make referrals.
- At the same time, don’t be afraid to identify a Navigator who is different from you. Similarities can provide a helpful starting place for mutual understanding. But Navigators who come from different backgrounds, cultures, educational experiences, and career interests can lend new insights and perspectives that you have not been exposed to before. They may offer unique viewpoints that add clarity to your own situation.

Once you have identified a trusted Navigator(s), you simply open the initial link to your ECP that is sent to you by your school or your Navigator. This will take you to a shared Google sheet where your ECP “lives.” Some students will receive the ECP link from their school counselor; some will access it through their school’s Learning Management System (e.g., Naviance or Google Classroom); others will receive the link from their main Navigator. Regardless of how you receive the link to your ECP form, an important first step is to make sure you share it with all the individuals you’ve identified to support you. (The screenshot below explains how to share the ECP form.) Once you access the link and share it with others, the fun begins!

Education & Career Plan: High School

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help Last edit was yesterday at 9:13 PM

100% 123 Poppins 11

**EDUCATION & CAREER PLAN (ECP)**

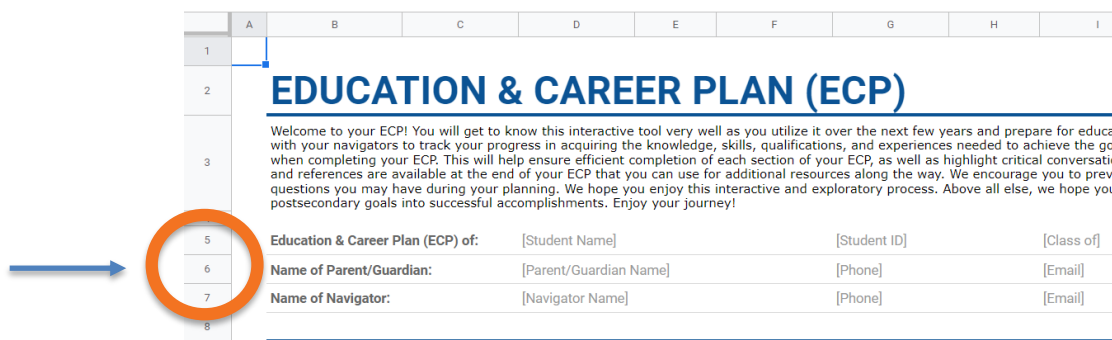
Welcome to your ECP! You will get to know this interactive tool very well as you utilize it over the next few years and prepare for education and career plans after high school. We recommend you use this tool as you work with your navigators to track your progress in acquiring the knowledge, skills, qualifications, and experiences needed to achieve the goals you plan for yourself. Don't forget to use your Student Quick Guide as a resource when completing your ECP. This will help ensure efficient completion of each section of your ECP, as well as highlight critical conversations you can address with your navigators throughout your journey. Additional readings and references are available at the end of your ECP that you can use for additional resources along the way. We encourage you to preview these readings and references with your navigators, as many will help answer key questions you may have during your planning. We hope you enjoy this interactive and exploratory process. Above all else, we hope your ECP helps organize and ease your planning efforts in a way that turns your postsecondary goals into successful accomplishments. Enjoy your journey!

Education & Career Plan (ECP) of:	[Student Name]	[Student ID]	[Class of]	[Student Email]	[Student Phone]
Name of Parent/Guardian:	[Parent/Guardian Name]	[Phone]	[Email]		
Name of Navigator:	[Navigator Name]	[Phone]	[Email]		

To share with other Navigators, simply open your ECP and find the green Share button on the top right corner. When you click, you can either add your Navigators' email addresses directly or copy a link of your ECP and share with them that way.

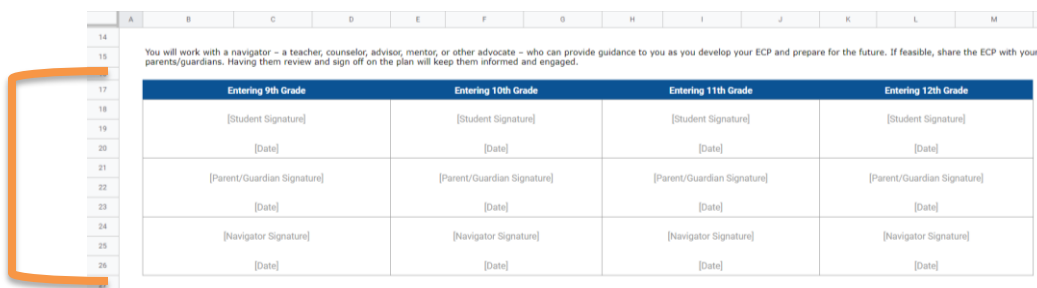
## THE BASICS

Complete the general background information with the names and contact info of yourself and Navigator(s) (Rows 5–7). Include your main Navigator’s information in Row 7. Additional Navigators can be added to the ECP by simply adding more rows after Row 7.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1									
2		<b>EDUCATION &amp; CAREER PLAN (ECP)</b>							
3		Welcome to your ECP! You will get to know this interactive tool very well as you utilize it over the next few years and prepare for education with your navigators to track your progress in acquiring the knowledge, skills, qualifications, and experiences needed to achieve the goal when completing your ECP. This will help ensure efficient completion of each section of your ECP, as well as highlight critical conversation and references are available at the end of your ECP that you can use for additional resources along the way. We encourage you to preview questions you may have during your planning. We hope you enjoy this interactive and exploratory process. Above all else, we hope your postsecondary goals into successful accomplishments. Enjoy your journey!							
5		Education & Career Plan (ECP) of:		[Student Name]		[Student ID]		[Class of]	
6		Name of Parent/Guardian:		[Parent/Guardian Name]		[Phone]		[Email]	
7		Name of Navigator:		[Navigator Name]		[Phone]		[Email]	
8									

You’ll notice we’ve included a table in the ECP to help keep track of the various comments and feedback you may receive along the way (Rows 17–26). Your main Navigator and any others you’ve chosen to share your ECP with can easily add their insights to the document. Tracking comments and feedback from all Navigators will help ensure proper planning, communication, and organization.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
14		You will work with a navigator – a teacher, counselor, advisor, mentor, or other advocate – who can provide guidance to you as you develop your ECP and prepare for the future. If feasible, share the ECP with your parents/guardians. Having them review and sign off on the plan will keep them informed and engaged.											
17		Entering 9th Grade			Entering 10th Grade			Entering 11th Grade			Entering 12th Grade		
18		[Student Signature]			[Student Signature]			[Student Signature]			[Student Signature]		
19		[Date]			[Date]			[Date]			[Date]		
20		[Parent/Guardian Signature]			[Parent/Guardian Signature]			[Parent/Guardian Signature]			[Parent/Guardian Signature]		
21		[Date]			[Date]			[Date]			[Date]		
22		[Navigator Signature]			[Navigator Signature]			[Navigator Signature]			[Navigator Signature]		
23		[Date]			[Date]			[Date]			[Date]		
24													
25													
26													



## SECTION 1: EDUCATION & CAREER GOAL SETTING & PLANNING

This section of the ECP is the foundation for your education and career planning. This is where you identify what your career goals are, what credentials you will need to achieve them, what high school work you need to complete, and what additional experience(s) would help you reach your goals. We recommend you complete some career exploration inventories through your school’s learning management system (such as Naviance or Xello), if available. If your school does not use a learning management system, no need to worry! Check out the Resources Roadmap section of this guide for links to free self-inventories that can help you answer some of the career exploration questions. Once you’ve identified your career goal(s), dedicate some time to research information

that will help you answer the additional section headers (e.g., credentials, coursework, and extracurriculars). Don't forget to refer to the Resources Roadmap in the guide to help you with the exploratory and planning phases. Once you've identified the information you find of value, fill in the table with your responses and review with your Navigator(s) for feedback. Meet with your Navigator at least twice a year to review and update as needed.



## **SECTION 2: ACADEMIC & EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: A RECORD OF HIGH SCHOOL PROGRESS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

This section is where you track both coursework you have completed and courses you plan to take. We recommend you work closely with your school guidance counselor to ensure your course planning aligns with both your high school graduation requirements and your postsecondary needs. When you meet with your counselor or Navigator each year, note the courses you successfully completed that year, along with the grades you received. Then, look back at Section 1 and review your career goals and interests, along with any assessments you've taken. Add to your ECP the future courses that will help you reach those goals. If you completed any postsecondary testing—such as the PSAT, SAT, or ACT—be sure to record those results in this section as well.

Many postsecondary opportunities will require an application or personal statement of some sort. Some may even require a resume. This section of the ECP includes space where you can add details about your afterschool and out-of-school experiences. This is a great way to help keep track of your key activities and yearly highlights—which will make it easier when the time comes to write your resume, application, and personal statement. All of your information will be stored in one place.



## **SECTION 3: CAREER EXPLORATION: A RECORD OF PROGRESS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS**

Look once again at your career goals in Section 1 so you can start taking action on some career-development activities that will help you reach those goals (such as conducting career-exploration activities and work-based learning activities). What activities have you completed so far? What activities do you need to get a jump on? If you don't know the answers to some questions, that's perfectly OK. This is what the career exploration phase is all about! You can refer to the Resources Roadmap in your ECP or use a Google search to find answers to some questions. Or, better yet, connect with your Navigator and see what insights or possible networks they may have that can help support you. Once you've taken action, summarize your activities and accomplishments in this section.



## **SECTION 4: POSTSECONDARY READINESS: A RECORD OF PROGRESS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS**

Most likely, the career goals you've identified will require some sort of additional training and education beyond high school. Whether making plans to attend college, technical school, or other postsecondary program, you will need to complete a few steps. This section outlines categories of action that may be important in your postsecondary planning (e.g., preparing a personal statement, completing a national test, diagnosing and addressing skills gaps). Use this section of your ECP to

summarize the work you've done in these areas and the results you've received. You should review this section at least once a year with your Navigator—not only to go over what you've already done, but to identify any next steps you should take. Note that some activities may only be applicable to your junior and senior years of high school (or, depending on your postsecondary plans, may not be applicable to you at all). There is no need to fill every box of this section—just those that are relevant to you.

### Additional Reading & References

As you prepare your postsecondary plans, you are bound to have questions—and more than likely, your Navigator might not be able to answer them all. Check out this section for information related to general postsecondary planning; financial aid and paying for education beyond high school; testing requirements and study resources; as well as helpful college application websites. Simply click on the links provided in each subsection to learn more!



### Remember

You can share your ECP with anyone you consider a Navigator—a teacher, counselor, mentor, parent, or any person helping you prepare for your path towards college and career readiness. The unique benefit of the ECP design is that it allows for a collaborative process; that is, you can share the same live document with all of the Navigators in your life who are sharing great insights and lending support in different ways. The ECP allows for the information to be shared with whomever is providing you support, while the focus is uniquely centered just on you!



“Connecting with my Navigator to work on my ECP has left me feeling not only organized but motivated and ready to tackle my future.”

- Pathway to Success Participant, 2020



## RESOURCES ROADMAP



### Self-Inventory Assessments

- ✓ [Skills Assessment](#)
- ✓ [Personality & Career Assessment](#)
- ✓ [Work Values Assessment](#)
- ✓ [Career Exploration Assessment](#)

### Writing Your Resume

- ✓ [The Importance of the High School Resume](#)
- ✓ [High School Student Resume Template](#)
- ✓ [Your High School Resume: A Step-By-Step Guide](#)
- ✓ [How to Write a High School Resume for College Applications](#)



### Writing Your Personal Statement

- ✓ [What Is a Personal Statement? Everything You Need to Know About the College Essay](#)
- ✓ [How to Write Your Personal Statement in 4 Easy Steps](#)
- ✓ [College 101: Awesome Examples of Personal Statements](#)
- ✓ [First-Year Essay Prompts: The Common App](#)

### Creating Your LinkedIn Profile

- ✓ [How to Use LinkedIn in High School](#)
- ✓ [LinkedIn Profile Checklist for High School](#)

### Informational Interviews

- ✓ [What Exactly Are Informational Interviews?](#)
- ✓ [15 Questions to Ask in an Informational Interview](#)
- ✓ [How to Land and Ace an Informational Interview](#)
- ✓ [Informational Interview Etiquette](#)



### Preparing for Job Interviews

- ✓ [Job Search Tips for High School Students](#)
- ✓ [Student Job Interviews: Questions & Answers](#)
- ✓ [Interview Tips for High School Students](#)
- ✓ [Benefits of Having a Job in High School](#)
- ✓ [Financial Planning Tips for High School Students](#)



### Preparing for College Interviews

- ✓ [College Interviews: The Basics](#)
- ✓ [College Interview Questions You Must Prepare For](#)
- ✓ [Top College Interview Tips](#)
- ✓ [The Ultimate College Interview Guide](#)





## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

### Collaborate

The first step towards developing a successful ECP is to make sure you include all the Navigators in your life and that they collaborate on this plan with you. Their comments and feedback, which you can record in the general section of your ECP, will allow for cross-communication among the diverse supports in your life. Communication is the key to all successful partnerships and relationships. The ECP very much relies on this partnership of Navigators.

### Ask Questions

This is a new journey for you, and quite possibly, a new journey for your family or Navigator(s). You may come across many unknowns—whether these are next steps, strange terminology, or unfamiliar resources and supports needed along the way. And “not to know” is OK. What’s not OK, is not asking the questions to learn the answers. The college and career readiness processes require vulnerability, honesty, and commitment. If you can embrace the process, you will make the progress you strive for. In essence, you will get out of this experience what you put into it.

### Explore

This is a time in your life where you can explore, make mistakes, and try new things. Be open to the process, learn about new paths you never considered before, meet new people to expand your network. And above all else, trust yourself and have fun. Let your mind be the explorer and let your ECP and Navigator(s) be your guide along the way.

