Help Your Teen Envision Their Future

Presenter: Greg Rafal-Brooks

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BigFuture®



Meet today's speakers.





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Agenda

Importance of vision building, Q&A

Starter conversations to help your teen, Q&A

Demo: Vision Builder tool

Q&A

Importance of vision building

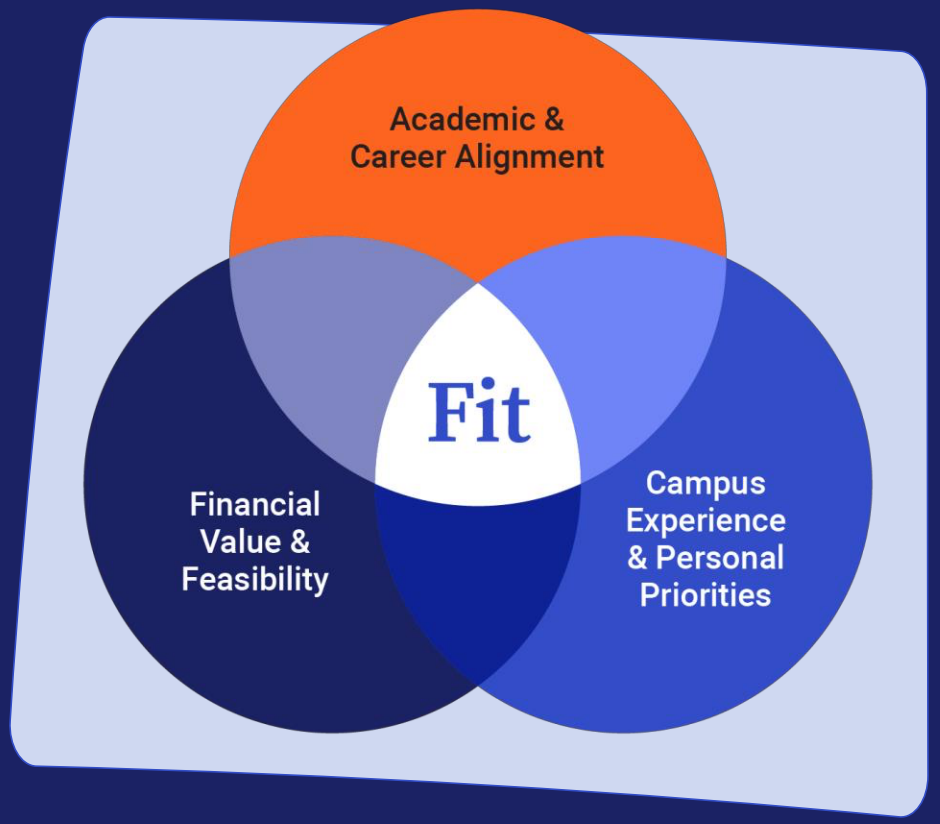




Meet Jasmine

“If it doesn’t have a marching band, it’s not on my list.”

Jasmine, high school senior, rural Georgia



Every teen considers these fit factors. Each has their own criteria.

When teens find a good fit, they're more likely to graduate college in four years.

Students with a...

Strong Academic Match

↑ 7

percentage point higher completion rate in four years

Strong Interest Match

↑ 4

percentage point higher completion rate in four years

Many college freshmen are uncertain they found the best college fit for them.

only **47%**

completely agree their college is a good fit for them.

54%

Said it was difficult to find information to make their college decision.

"It's very expensive, I'm very far away from my family, and there aren't other people like me here. I'm very lonely."

- College Freshman

College Board survey (2026)

When students don’t find a good fit, there are real costs.

1.2M

college students who transferred in Fall 2024

$13K - $26K

additional costs from transferring

1 in 3

full-time college students who won’t complete their degree in 6 years

Sources: National Student Clearinghouse (2025), Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice (2024)

Prestige, pressure, or incomplete information influence many decisions.



42%

College lists on BigFuture.org with at least one of the same 10 schools



3%

Percentage of college-going students enrolled in those 10 schools



70%

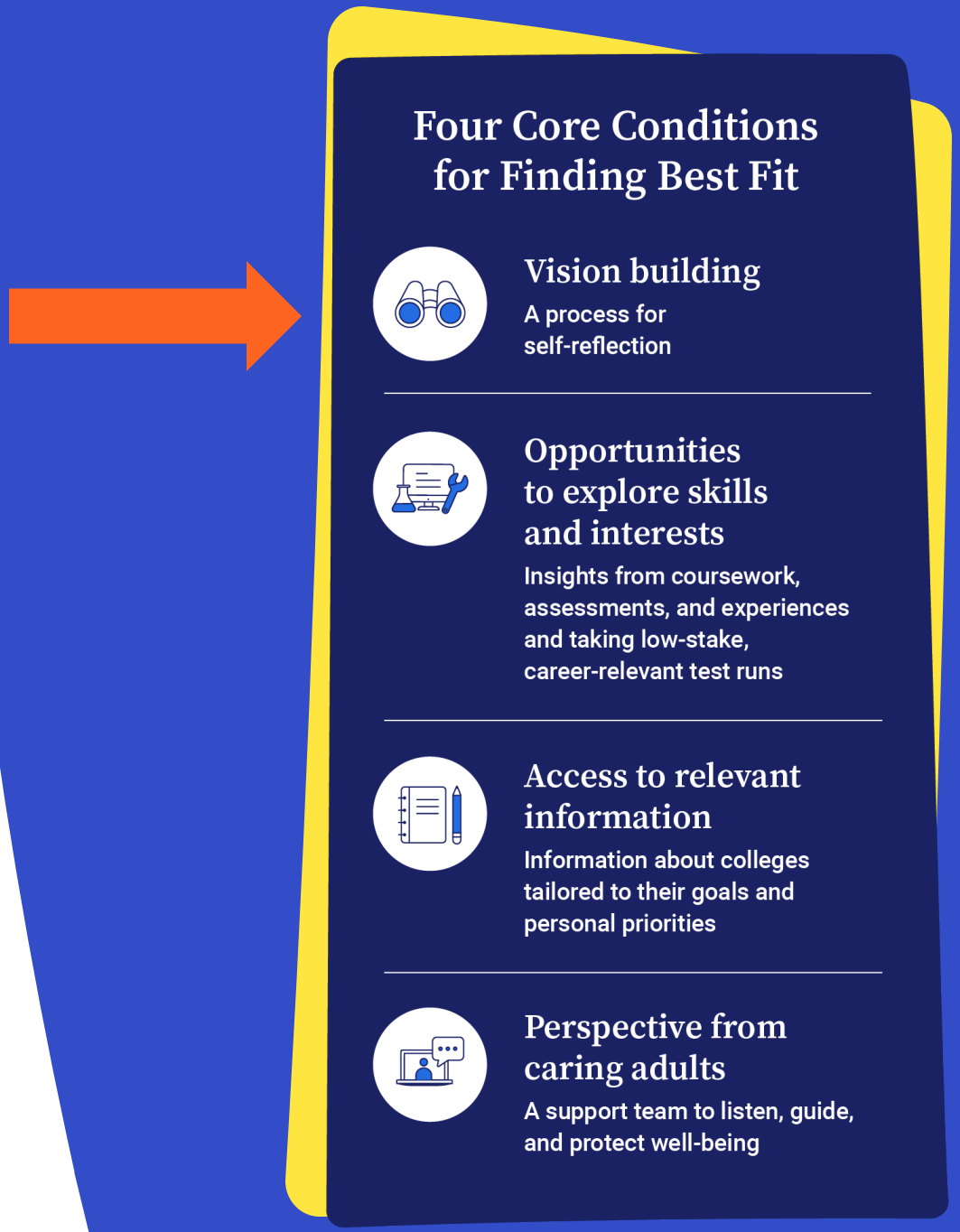
Students who were afraid a single mistake could keep them from going to college



56%

Teens who feel pressure to have their future “figured out”

Teens need four conditions to find their best fit, based on promising practices among college access orgs and counselors.



CollegeBoard

From “Where?” to “Who?”

~~Where?~~

Instead of “Where do I want to go?” try:

What are my values?

What kind of lifestyle do I want?

What kind of impact do I want to make?

Your role: make room to explore

Only about 4% of high schoolers have ample chances to explore with curiosity, which researchers call “Explorer mode.” You can help create that space.



Your questions

What questions do you have?

Send them anytime with the Q&A button.

Download the Future Planning Guide for Parents, Mentors, and Families
bigfuture.org/familyguide

Starter conversations



- Parents have more influence than anyone over teens' college decisions.
- You don't need college experience to help.
- You just need to be someone they can think out loud with.

You're the right person for this

Start here: help your teen imagine their future



Conversation 1 of 7

Knowing what your teen wants their life to look like guides every choice that comes next.

2	3	4	5	6	7
Call out passions and interests	Recognize strengths	Understand areas for growth	Try new things in high school	Prepare for the transition	Define their fit factors

Three questions to try



"What kind of life do you see yourself having as an adult?"



"What's your endgame?"



"What do you hope to achieve one day?"

Six more conversations to keep going

2

Call out passions and interests

YOU COULD ASK

- "What types of activities do you enjoy most?"
- "What makes you lose track of time?"
- "Where do you feel most comfortable?"

3

Recognize strengths

YOU COULD ASK

- "What do you feel like you're really good at?"
- "What are your top skills?"
- "When do family and friends ask for your help or advice?"
- "What skills have you built through your outside-of-school activities?"

4

Understand areas for growth

YOU COULD ASK

- "If you struggled in a particular class or project, what was most challenging?"
- "What are some skills you are working on improving?"
- "When do you know you need to ask for help?"

Six more conversations to keep going

5

Try new things in high school

YOU COULD ASK

- "What classes or extracurriculars can you try now to learn more about what you might do in the future?"
- "Are there courses you could try?" (For example, many schools now offer AP Business with Personal Finance, AP Cybersecurity, and AP Seminar.)
- "Who do we know in our community who can help you get work experience in a field you're curious about?"

6

Prepare for the transition

YOU COULD ASK

- "How are you getting ready for this transition? How can I help?"
- "What are you worried or nervous about? What makes you feel excited?"
- "Where will you seek support when you need it?"

7

Define their fit factors

YOU COULD ASK

- "Which academic programs will prepare you for careers that interest you?"
- "What career-connected supports and experiences will help you prepare?"
- "Based on your career aspirations, how much income do you anticipate after college?"
- "What financial resources do we have available and what types of aid do we need?"

Examples: How to help your teen imagine their future

Make it part of your day



In the car



Waiting in line



On a walk

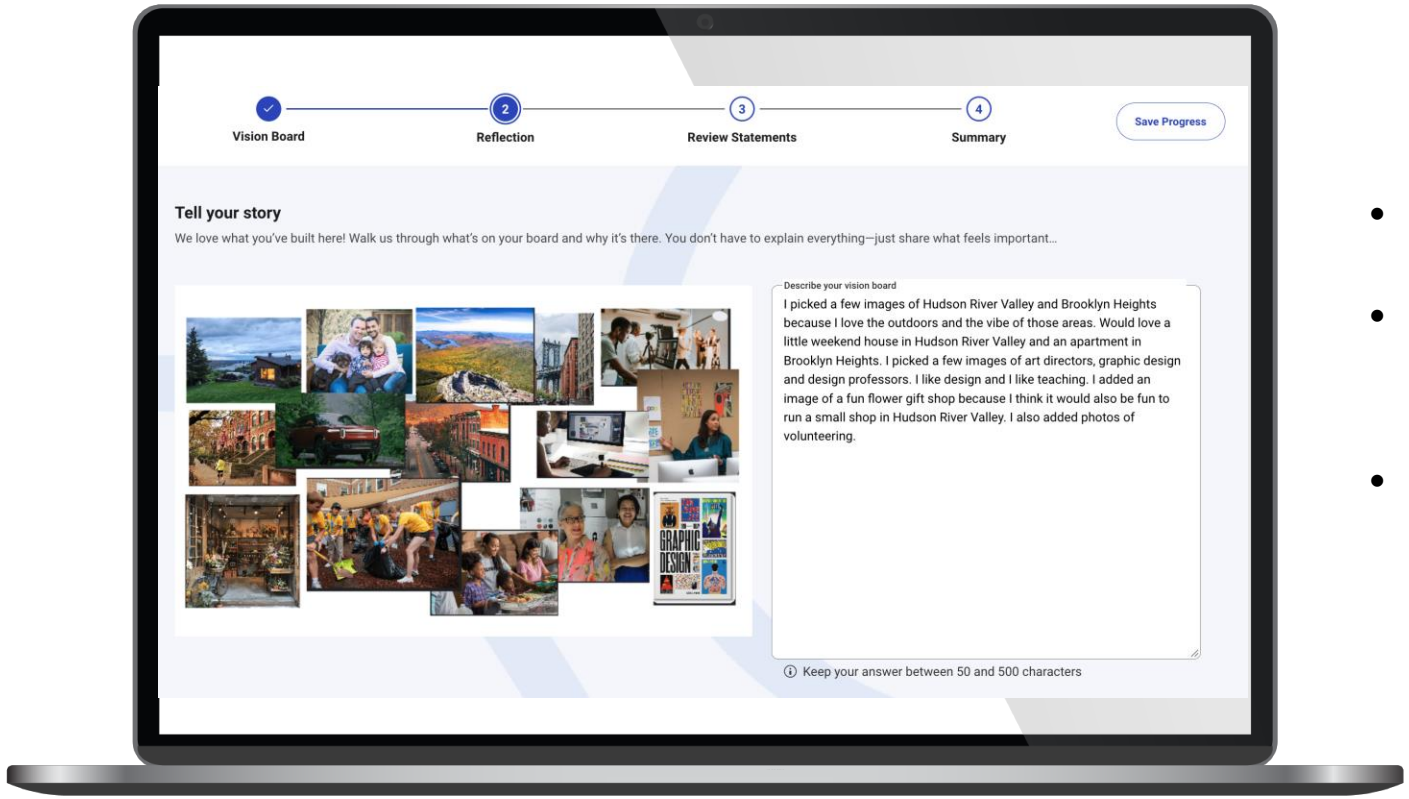


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Vision Builder demo



Vision Builder is a new, low-stakes activity that can help students discover what they value without the pressure to have all the answers.



- Give students space to dream and reflect on their values, interests, and aspirations to begin their college and career planning.
- Some teens think best by writing.
- Others think best by making something.
- Vision Builder lets your teen build a picture of their future.

All in just 5-10 minutes.

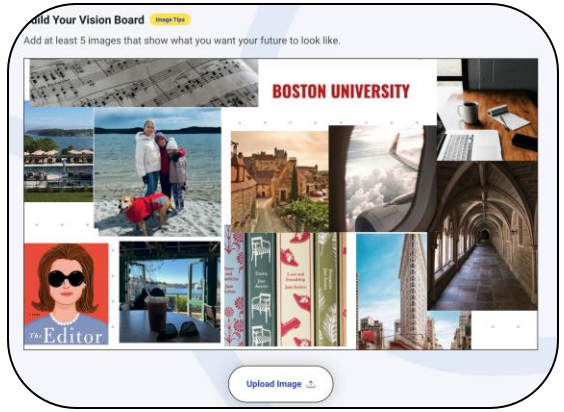
Vision Builder helps your teen picture their future

A new low-stakes self-reflection tool that's helping students build and talk about their vision for their future.

Here's how it works:

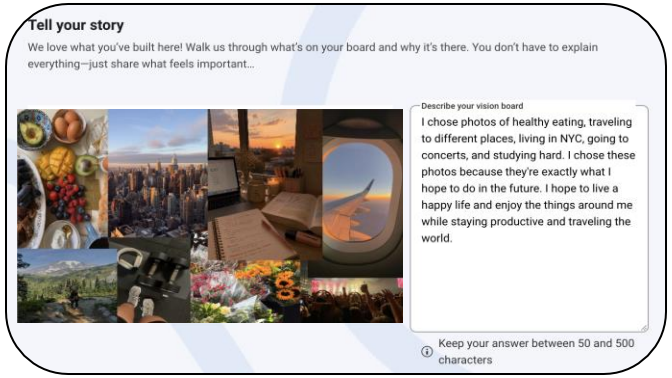
1

Add images to a digital canvas



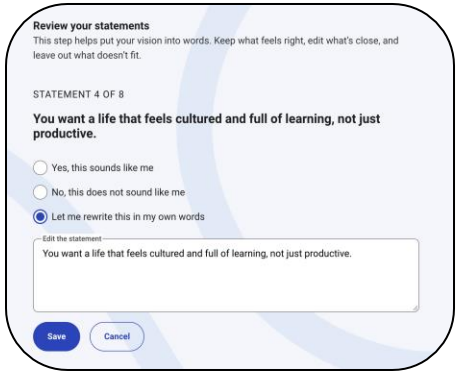
2

Complete a guided reflection



3

Validate statements about their vision



4

And reach an overview page



All in just 10 mins.

Turn the board into a conversation

