

Life After York Q & A: Parent to Parent Advice

Alternatives to Four-Year College

Alternatives to Four-Year Colleges

Common misconception that four-year colleges are always the best option or route.

Why NOT a Four-Year College?

- Doesn't like traditional school much.
- Wants to explore a specific field but not necessarily motivated/interested in general education coursework.
- Is great at more hands-on learning.
- Lacks focus and/or motivation.
- Feeling burned out from working so hard at academics.
- Needs to break out of a routine of expectations.
- Has been too busy trying to do what is expected but hasn't had much time to reflect on what he/she really wants.
- Would benefit from some time to mature.

What are the Options?

- Gap Year
- Post-Graduate Year
- Military
- Trades/Apprenticeship Programs
- WorkNet DuPage
- Career Specific Degrees and/or Certificates

Gap Year

- ▶ What is it?
 - ▶ Very common in the UK and EU. Growing in popularity in the US, particularly East.
 - ▶ Year to perform service, expand language/cultural horizons, explore an interest.
 - ▶ Structured and specific.
- ▶ What is it NOT?
 - ▶ A year “off” to just hang out and do nothing different.
 - ▶ A yearlong vacation.
 - ▶ A way to avoid responsibility.
- ▶ Where to find them?
 - ▶ Good resources on CCRC website: <http://york.elmhurst205.org/gapyear>

Many students will apply to college during senior year but ask to defer their admission for a year.

Some students want to explore interests before committing to a specific post-high school plan.

Post-Graduate Year

- ▶ Typically done at a boarding school or independent school.
- ▶ Some programs that earn high school credit and others that earn college credit.
- ▶ Many focus on skill-building to improve college success.
- ▶ Some are academic but meant to give exposure to athletes looking to be recruited by four-year colleges.
- ▶ Wide range of options and research will be important in order to find the right program for your child.

Military Options

- ▶ Wide range of options and can assist in obtaining a degree while serving and/or via the GI Bill after serving.
- ▶ Enlistment - Typically a four-year commitment.
- ▶ Reserves/Guard - The two programs are similar. Enlisted but work in a civilian job while training regularly. Can be called up to active duty. Length of service varies. (Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, Coast Guard Reserve)
- ▶ CCRC website has more resources: <http://york.elmhurst205.org/military>

Trades/Apprenticeships or Work Net DuPage/Make Your Way

- ▶ There are union and non-union options to get into a career involving specific trades.
- ▶ Apprenticeship programs have applications to be accepted and those who are accepted can earn money while learning. The income increases with each year of training.
- ▶ Trade schools can lead to similar jobs (in most cases) but you pay tuition, just like traditional college programs. Trade schools can be very expensive though may offer some forms of financial assistance. Encourage students to look for the cheapest options to earn the training needed. Community Colleges often offer a variety of trade-related programs.
- ▶ CCRC website has more resources: <http://york.elmhurst205.org/school-to-work>
- ▶ Work Net DuPage/Make Your Way: <http://worknetdupage.org/youth/youth-employment.php>

Career Specific Associates or Certificates

- ▶ College of DuPage is a great resource for a wide range of programs, degrees, and certificates.
- ▶ Associates in Applied Sciences: Some general education coursework but mostly career-specific courses. Wide range of careers that do not need a four-year degree but do need specialized training, licensing, or certification.
 - ▶ COD: http://www.cod.edu/programs/degree_programs.aspx
- ▶ Certificates: These are typically added on to other credentials but there are some certificates that can help a student advance in a career without a degree.
 - ▶ COD: http://www.cod.edu/programs/career_technical_programs.aspx
- ▶ Vocational Skills Courses: Non-credit courses to develop skills. For adults who may not be able to handle college level coursework.
 - ▶ COD: <http://www.cod.edu/academics/conted/vocational/index.aspx>