The **BIG** Idea

- How can I identify colleges to consider for education after high school?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

I.   Warm Up: My Dream School
     (5 minutes)

II. Safety, Match, Reach: College
     Search Vocabulary (5 minutes)

III. Online College Search
     (25 minutes)

IV. My Calendar of Deadlines
     (5 minutes)

V.   Wrap Up: All Aboard?
     (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

❑ **PORTFOLIO PAGES:**

   - Portfolio page 12, List of Top Ten Schools

   - Portfolio pages 13 - 22, My Top Ten Schools

❑ **STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:**

   - Student Handbook page 139, My Dream School

   - Student Handbook pages 140-142, School Finder College Search Steps

   - Student Handbook page 143, Calendar of Deadlines

❑ **FACILITATOR PAGES:**

   - Facilitator Resource 1, Safety, Match, Reach: College Search Vocabulary

❑ Overhead and/or LCD projector

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Learn about reach, match, and safety schools.

- Explore the School Finder tool in RUReadyND.com.

- Develop a "Top 10" list of colleges.

- Order materials from these schools to be mailed home.

OVERVIEW

As students near the end of 11ᵗʰ grade, it's time to start zeroing in on some realistic college choices, and identifying schools that might be "a good fit." This lesson, and the three that follow, will help students do this. Key to the process is personal assessment and college research. Students must evaluate career goals, think about lifestyle preferences, assess academic standing, factor in finances, research schools, and compare the results. Luckily, this process can be streamlined by using an online college search tool.

In this lesson, students go online to RUReadyND.com and use the School Finder tool. They identify approximately 10 schools that make up a good personal list of reach, match, and safety schools. They will order informational materials from these schools. In addition, they will review a list of suggested steps for junior and senior years.

PREPARATION

❑ Talk to the school counselor and collaborate on ways to facilitate the process of choosing colleges.

❑ If, during the course of facilitating these lessons, you encounter questions you can't answer, please consult your school counselor to make sure you're providing the most accurate and up-to-date information.

❑ The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
- **Facilitator Resource 1, Safety, Match, Reach: College Search Vocabulary**
- **Student Handbook page 143, Calendar of Deadlines**
- **Student Handbook pages 140-142, School Finder College Search Steps**
- **Portfolio pages 13 - 22, My Top Ten Schools**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Developing a realistic list of college choices sounds easier than it is. There are many factors to consider, and it takes time, effort, and research, and the process involves a personal honesty and self-awareness that may not be comfortable or familiar. But ultimately, it's empowering for students to think about who they are and what they want, and to develop a list of schools that will be right for *them*.

VOCABULARY

Safety School: A school where you will almost certainly be accepted because your grades and exam scores are higher than the requirements.

Match School: A school where you think you'd be happy academically and socially, and where you fall into the middle of their GPA and ACT/SAT score range.

Reach School: A top choice or "dream" school that is less likely to accept you because it is highly competitive and/or because your academics are just equal to, or fall short of, the school's requirements.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

For the remainder of the unit, students considering tech and trade schools may continue to research these options. Encourage students considering these postsecondary choices to research community colleges or four-year schools in their field of interest if there is any chance they may go to these types of schools. Students considering the military should compare this choice with civilian options.

There may not be as much information readily available for tech and trade schools, so students considering these choices need to be proactive, making phone calls to gather information they need to make decisions. It would be helpful to enlist the help of your school counselor or host teacher to assist in troubleshooting issues as students work independently.

It is highly unlikely that your students will complete their research for all 10 schools during class time. Feel free to reduce the number of schools students are required to research to four or five. Students should be strongly encouraged to complete the research for the rest of their schools on their own time.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. As students enter, direct them to **Student Handbook page 139, My Dream School**. Give them two to three minutes to answer the questions.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: How many of you found it easy to imagine yourself in college, and picture the details of that dream school? [Students respond.] And how many of you thought, "Um, ah, gee, well…I really don't have a clue!" [Students respond, probably in the majority.] Well, if you were in the "um, er, well, I dunno" group, you're probably in the majority. Most juniors don't know where they'll end up after high school, and find it hard to visualize their future. And even if you do have a dream school, after taking everything into consideration, it might not be where you end up wanting to go. So today we're going to look at some of the factors that will help you decide where to apply.

II. Safety, Match, Reach: College Search Vocabulary (5 minutes)

1. Place the transparency of **Facilitator Resource 1, Safety, Match, Reach: College Search Vocabulary** on the overhead projector.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: In a moment we'll go to a website where you'll answer a questionnaire to help focus your college search, and develop a list of prospective schools. But first, let's look at the three different categories of schools you should end up with on your list. They're called safety, match, and reach schools. Let's start with "safety." What's a **safety school**?

   [Ask a student to read aloud the definition for **safety school.**]

   OK, so a safety school is one where you're almost certain to be admitted, based on your current GPA and the scores of any standardized college exams you've already taken.

   [Ask a student to read aloud the definition for **match school.**]

   That's right. A match school is one where you feel you'd fit in, and you fall into the middle of their GPA and ACT/SAT score range, so there's a good chance you'll be accepted.

[Ask a student to read aloud the definition for **reach school**.]

OK, so a reach school is a big "maybe" worth reaching for, because you're passionate about applying to that particular school, or because you might end up boosting your grades and scores before applying and it's worth a try.

III. Online College Search (25 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: Now let's go to RUReadyND.com. We'll be using the School Finder. This is a tool that will help you develop a list of school choices. You will be able to evaluate the schools on this list to see which ones are safety, match, and reach schools. It's a little like "E-Harmony," except you end up with a list of possible colleges…instead of a list of possible dates!

2. Write RUReadyND.com on the board, and tell students to go to the site. As they are finding it, explain that in addition to generating a list of schools they can print out and take home, RUReadyND.com will give them the option to click on individual college websites, where they can request information to be mailed to them at home.

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: We'll go through the basic part of the School Finder together, step by step, but please know that you have the same information on **Student Handbook page 140 - 142, School Finder Steps**, so if you get lost or want to move ahead more quickly, you can use that as your guide. Raise your hand if you need more time to find the website. [Wait if necessary.] Okay, let's begin.

   First, you should sign in to RUReadyND.com by entering your account name and password. Next, click on the **College Planning** tab, and then on the **Explore Post-secondary Schools** section. Click on the **School Finder** tool. You'll find this under the heading School Exploration Tools.

   Along the left side of the page you will see the heading Choose Characteristics. There are eight categories you can choose to answer questions about: Key Facts, Admissions, Costs and Financial Aid, Academics, Student Body, Sports, Campus Life & Services and Career Connect. You can select criteria from any category that interests you. We'll start out by selecting a few criteria, together.

   Let's start by choosing criteria about **Location**. You'll find this in the first category, titled Key Facts. You can check off as many items as you want. You may wish to select certain states, like North Dakota, or you may wish to choose an entire region, like the West. If

you choose many states or a region, you are likely to get a larger number of college matches than you would if you simply choose a single state.

Please check off the states or regions that interest you now.

Next, we're going to consider the second criteria. Click on **School Type**. If you want to go to a technical or trade school, check the box next to Vocational or Technical programs. If you want to go to a two-year college, check the box next to Associate degree programs, and if you want to go to a four-year college, check the box next to Bachelor's degree programs.

Let's look at the other types of criteria that you can select under Key Facts. These criteria include Public/Private, School Setting, School Size, Academic Calendar, and Historically Black. Some of these criteria may be important to you. For example, you may really want to attend college in a major city or, alternatively, you may want to attend college in a rural area. If this is important to you, you should click **School Setting** from the list of criteria and check off the setting that you are interested in. On the other hand, you may not have a preference as to whether your school is Public or Private. If you don't have a preference in that area, you don't need to click on **Public/Private** and select a criteria.

I'm going to give you a few minutes to select any other criteria under Key Facts that are important to you and to check off your selections.

[Circulate to make sure everyone's comfortable with the process.]

The next section is labeled Admissions. There are a number of criteria that you can choose in this section. Choose the GPA range that your own Entrance Difficulty falls within.

Remember the scale:
4.0 = A
3.0 = B
2.0 = C
1.0 = D

After we have finished the examples, you can go back and select other criteria under Admissions, if any other criteria are important to you.

The next section is called Costs and Financial Aid. You might not want to limit your school search based on costs at this stage. Financial aid may put expensive schools within your reach. It's a good strategy to apply to several schools that vary in cost, so that if you don't get the financial aid you'd planned on, you have a less expensive plan B.

Now let's look at the section called Academics. Click on the link for **Programs**/**Majors** offered. Click the **Show Programs** button next to your favorite Career Cluster or Clusters. Check the box next to any programs that you are interested in. At the bottom of the page, make sure you select Search for ANY. This will search for schools that offer at least one of your majors.

Now I'm going to give you a few minutes to choose any of the other criteria from your list that are important to you. Remember, the more criteria you choose, the shorter, or more focused, your list will tend to be. Raise your hand if you have any questions.

[Circulate around the room and assist students as needed.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: When you are finished selecting your criteria, scroll to the bottom of the criteria list. The last item says Save your current search as:. Enter a name for this search in the box below, and then click on the **Save your current search as:** link. Now this search is saved and you will be able to access it at any time. You can create new searches at any time.

For now, click the link in the center of the page that says **See Your Matching Schools**. This will show you the list of schools that match the criteria that you selected.

Don't worry if you don't recognize all the schools on your list. If there is a school that you really love that didn't come up in your results list, you can still research it. But make sure to stay open minded; a school you've never heard of could be the perfect fit for your interests and career goals.

Make sure everyone is with you now, following along. Then instruct students to record their top 10 choices on **Portfolio page 12, List of Top Ten Schools**. NOTE: Students can also list five schools from their list and five other schools that they are interested in researching.

Then have students turn to **Portfolio pages 13-22, My Top Ten Schools**. Instruct students to record the name of each college along with the info listed under the General Info box (top left). The information in this box can be found within each school profile. Students will need to click the tabs on the left side of the page to find the information.

Circulate and make sure everyone is printing out, or hand-writing, their list. If there are any students whose search did not generate a list, or who did not get at least 10 schools, suggest they return to the survey later and request more general selections so that more schools will be included. Remind students that they will fill in the remaining information in the upcoming weeks.

If time permits have students request free information from their top schools. For each school they will need to click on the Admissions tab on the school profile. This page will generally provide a contact e-mail for students requesting information from the office of admissions.

4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: Whenever you sign into RUReadyND.com, you can click on the **College Planning tab,** and then on **Explore Post-Secondary Schools..** If you click on **School Finder,** you will see a list of any searches that you have saved. Just click on the name of any search, and your schools will come up.

5. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: You've all done a great job today thinking about your future and coming up with a list of potential schools. If any of you feel you weren't quite ready to make some of the decisions on the questionnaire, spend some time this week thinking about the basics: two- or four-year school, close to home or farther away, big or small campus, what you might be interested in studying. Then go back to RUReady-ND.com, and do a new college search. See what comes up!

You can go through this process as many times as you like; no one will see your investigations, and the process of thinking about the future will ultimately help you pursue, and reach, your goals. If any of you feel ready to identify your top school choices, spend some time this week browsing the schools' websites, getting to know them better. And in a day or so, start checking your mail! Read the pamphlets you get from the colleges you e-mailed today, and see if you can imagine yourself there. Eventually, I promise, you *will* find a school that's just right for you.

IV. Wrap Up: My Calendar of Deadlines (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: Great job completing the School Finder in RUReadyND.com. Take the list home, share it with your parents, and bring it to class next week. During that lesson, you'll explore the schools you selected in greater detail.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: Now, turn to **Student Handbook page 143, Calendar of Deadlines.** This list will help you organize for the rest of junior and senior year. Take a quick glance at it, as I read the points aloud.

3. Read the calendar aloud. Field questions.

Safety, Match, Reach
College Search Vocabulary

Safety School: A school where you will almost certainly be accepted because your grades and exam scores are higher than the requirements.

Match School: A school where you think you'd be happy academically and socially, and where you fall into the middle of their GPA (grades) and ACT/SAT (standardized test) score range.

Reach School: A top choice or "dream" school that is less likely to accept you because it is highly competitive and/or because your academics are just equal to, or fall short of, the school's requirements.

My Dream School

Imagine you have a crystal ball and you can see into the future. You can see your-self after high school, enrolled at a college or school of higher education that is perfect for you. It has the right academics or training program, it's in the right set-ting, the other students are people you like, and the social, cultural, and/or sports activities are just what you want.

Describe the following about your dream school:

1. The setting (i.e. state or geographic region, city vs. country, big or small campus).

    _____

    _____

    _____

2. The subjects you're studying (i.e. nursing, mechanical engineering, liberal arts).

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. The other students (i.e. friendly, competitive, international, like/unlike me).

    _____

    _____

    _____

4. Social/cultural or sports events you'll go to this weekend (i.e. bluegrass concert, school dance, basketball game, pick-up game of dodge ball, art show).

    _____

    _____

    _____

School Finder College Search Steps
RUReadyND.com

1. **CONNECTING TO RUReadyND.com**

   - Turn on the computer.

   - Click on the icon that connects to the Internet (Internet Explorer, Mozilla, Firefox, etc.).

   - Type the web address into the dialog box (RUReadyND.com).

   - When the RUReadyND.com home page appears, enter your account name and password in the sign-in area.

2. **SCHOOL FINDER**

   - Now, click on the **College Planning** tab at the top of the screen, and then click on **Explore Post-secondary Schools**.

   - Under the section titled School Exploration Tools, click on the **School Finder**.

   - Select criteria that are important to you from beneath each of the eight headings. The eight headings are: Key Facts, Admissions, Costs and Financial Aid, Academics, Student Body, Sports, Campus Life and Services, and Career Connect.

   - In today's lesson, you will be using the following criteria:

     - **Location** (found under the Key Facts heading): You can check off as many locations as you want. You may wish to select certain states, like North Dakota, or you may wish to choose an entire region, like the Midwest. If you choose many states or a region, you are likely to get a larger number of college matches than you will if you choose a single state.

     - **School Type** (found under the Key Facts heading): Click on School Type. If you want to go to a technical or trade school, check the box next to Vocational or Technical programs. If you want to go to a two-year college, check the box next to Associate degree programs, and if you want to go to a four-year college, check the box next to Bachelor's degree programs.

     - Select any other criteria under Key Facts that are important to you and to check off your selections.

     - **GPA** (found under the Admissions heading): Click on GPA. Choose the GPA range that your own GPA falls within.

Remember the scale:

4.0 = A

3.0 = B

2.0 = C

1.0 = D

* Select any other criteria under Admissions that are important to you.

* **Costs and Financial Aid**: Although you can select from any of the listed criteria, you might not want to limit your school search based on costs at this stage. Financial aid may put expensive schools within your reach. It's a good strategy to apply to several schools that vary in cost, so that if you don't get the financial aid you'd planned on, you have a less expensive plan B.

* **Programs/Majors Offered** (found under the Academics heading): Click on the link for **Programs/Majors Offered**. Click the **Show Programs** button next to your favorite Career Cluster or Clusters. Check the box next to any programs that you are interested in. At the bottom of the page, make sure you select **Search for ANY.** This will search for schools that offer at least one of your majors.

* Now, choose any of the other criteria from the list that are important to you. Remember, the more criteria you choose, the shorter, or more focused, your list will tend to be.

3. SAVING SEARCHES

* When you are finished selecting your criteria, select "see your list of schools" at the bottom.

* On your results page at the top right, you'll see "Save Your Results." Select it and name your search, and then click Save.

* Now this search is saved and you will be able to access it at any time from your portfolio. You can also create new searches at any time.

4. YOUR RESULTS

* Access your list of schools by clicking on **See your list of schools.** If you are returning to a saved search, you can click on the name that you saved your search under in the Saved Searches box.

* A list of schools matching your criteria will appear.

* Print your list of schools by clicking **Print This** in the upper right corner of the page, or record your top 10 school choices on **Portfolio page 12, List of Top Ten Schools.** If there are schools that interest you that were not in your results, feel free to add them to your list.

Grade 11, Education After High School 5: Choosing a College
Student Handbook, School Finder College Search Steps

142

At least five schools need to come from your School Finder results.

- Turn to **Portfolio pages 13-22, My Top Ten Schools**. Record the name of each college along with the info listed under the general info box (top left). The information in this box can be found within each school profile. You will need to click the tabs on the left side of the page to find the information.

- Whenever you sign into the RUReadyND.com website, you can click on **College Planning**, and then on **Explore Post-secondary Schools**. If you click on **School Finder,** you will see a list of any searches that you have saved in the box on the right labeled Saved Searches. Just click on the name of any search, and your schools will come up.

Calendar of Deadlines

Junior Year

❏ Identify your top 10 college choices: three safety, three match, three reach schools (plus one extra). Get information and application materials mailed to you at home.

❏ Take the ACT or SAT, and any other tests required for admission.

❏ If possible, visit your top college choices.

❏ About 400 colleges across the country offer the chance to apply early. If you already know where you want to go to school, talk to your school counselor about Early Action or Early Decision options. (See https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/applying-101/the-facts-about-applying-early-is-it-right-for-you for details. And start working on your application this summer.)

❏ Ask teachers, counselors, or employers for letters of recommendation. Explain your goals and ambitions so they'll be more prepared to write about you. Check your application for the number of recommendations the school requires.

Senior Year

❏ Continue to visit schools.

❏ Finalize your college list.

❏ Stay on track with your grades and extracurricular activities.

❏ Take standardized tests if necessary.

❏ Make a calendar showing the application deadlines for admission, financial aid, and scholarships for your choice schools.

❏ Complete applications. Make sure you and your school's guidance office have sent all necessary materials, including test scores, recommendations, transcripts, and essays. Send in all of your materials early to make sure there is plenty of time to meet each school's application deadline.

For details, go to the RUReadyND.com **College Planning** Timeline. This is found under the College Planning tab in the **Prepare for College** section.

List of Top Ten Schools

My Top Ten Schools

Directions: Record your top 10 school choices from your School Finder results page. If there are schools that interest you that were not in your results, feel free to add them to your list. Just make sure that at least five schools are from your School Finder list.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

MY TOP TEN SCHOOLS

Name of College _____

My Info
My GPA:
My Class Rank:
My ACT score:
My SAT score:

General Info (from RUReadyND.com)

Location:

Enrollment:

SAT scores (Admissions tab):

ACT scores (Admissions tab):

Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab):

Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Tuition & Costs):

Website:

Academic Info

GPA:
3.75+	_____
3.5 – 3.74	_____
3.25- 3.49	_____
3.0 – 3.24	_____
2.5 – 2.99	_____
2.0 – 2.49	_____
1.0– 1.99	_____
below 1.0	_____

Class rank: Important? _____
Top tenth	_____
Top quarter	_____
Top half	_____
Bottom half	_____
Bottom quarter	_____

Academic match?
❏ Safety (I'm likely to get in)   ❏ Good match   ❏ A reach?

Academics • Majors • Faculty	
Sport • Intercollegiate sports	
Campus Life • Extracurricular Activities/Student Organizations • Fraternity/Sorority • Athletics	

Is this school for me?   ❏ Probably not   ❏ Maybe   ❏ Definitely

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Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab):

Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Tuition & Costs):

Website:

Academic Info

GPA:
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3.5 – 3.74	_____
3.25- 3.49	_____
3.0 – 3.24	_____
2.5 – 2.99	_____
2.0 – 2.49	_____
1.0– 1.99	_____
below 1.0	_____

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Bottom half	_____
Bottom quarter	_____

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Top half	_____
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Bottom quarter	_____

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My ACT score:
My SAT score:

General Info (from RUReadyND.com)

Location:

Enrollment:

SAT scores (Admissions tab):

ACT scores (Admissions tab):

Average secondary school GPA (Admissions tab):

Tuition (In-State/Out-of-state) (Tuition & Costs):

Website:

Academic Info

GPA:
3.75+	_____
3.5 – 3.74	_____
3.25- 3.49	_____
3.0 – 3.24	_____
2.5 – 2.99	_____
2.0 – 2.49	_____
1.0– 1.99	_____
below 1.0	_____

Class rank: Important? _____
Top tenth	_____
Top quarter	_____
Top half	_____
Bottom half	_____
Bottom quarter	_____

Academic match?
❑ Safety (I'm likely to get in) ❑ Good match ❑ A reach?

Academics • Majors • Faculty	
Sport • Intercollegiate sports	
Campus Life • Extracurricular Activities/Student Organizations • Fraternity/Sorority • Athletics	

Is this school for me? ❑ Probably not ❑ Maybe ❑ Definitely

MY TOP TEN SCHOOLS

Name of College _____

My Info
My GPA:
My Class Rank:
My ACT score:
My SAT score:

General Info (from RUReadyND.com)

Location:

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❑ Safety (I'm likely to get in)   ❑ Good match   ❑ A reach?

Academic Info

GPA:

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