



Post-16 Pathways Student Guide



Post-16 Pathways

Pathways	Description
LEVEL 3 QUALIFICATIONS A Levels A Levels can be studied at any sixth form or college e.g., Solihull College, Solihull Sixth Form College, Park Hall Academy, Arden Academy, King Edward Sixth Form, Solihull School... See page 6 for more details.	• A Levels are subject-based, very academic, challenging, require a love of the subject and a strong desire to excel in it; • It is important you can withstand the academic rigor associated with A Level study which is why you should only consider A Levels if you achieve <u>at least</u> grade 6 in that subject (or equivalent subject) at GCSE; • You will be expected to have a minimum GCSE grade 5 English and maths, unless you plan to study these subjects in which case you will need a grade 6; • You can choose to study new subjects at A Level such as Law, Economics, Politics, Sociology, Psychology... The list varies depending upon which sixth form/college you select; • Students' rationale for choosing the A Level subject, in some cases, should be based on post-18 plans (for example, if a student wishes to pursue medicine or dentistry at university, this will determine which A Levels they select). However, often a student studies A levels because they enjoy the subject, are good at it, and want to keep their options open for longer; • A Levels are Level 3 qualifications and equivalent to Level 3 Extended BTECs, T Level and V Levels; • Student should select the A Level subjects first, then the sixth form/college (as A Levels on offer vary), in other words the student should be led by the subject and not the sixth form or college; • It's helpful to be mindful of jobs relating to a specific subject - https://www.careerpilot.org.uk/job-sectors/subjects and https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/what-can-i-do-with-my-degree • Check out www.theuniguide.co.uk/a-level-explorer to see where your A- Level choices might take you; • Post A-Level options are employment, university, higher or degree level apprenticeships.
A Level / Vocational Combination College and some sixth forms.	• Some Sixth Forms such as Park Hall Academy and Solihull Sixth Form College, offer a combination of A Level and vocational study. For example, a student might elect to study A Level English alongside a double BTEC National Diploma in Business. Together, these equate to 3 A Levels. Another example might be A Level English and law, alongside BTEC criminology – this too equates to 3 A Levels; • A new update to combining courses will include, from September 2027, V Levels (see separate section on V Levels) • Post-18 options are employment, university, higher or degree level apprenticeships.

Pathways	Description
LEVEL 3 QUALIFICATION Full-time Vocational Courses (Level 3 Extended BTECS) Studied at all colleges and some sixth forms, e.g., Solihull Sixth Form College, Park Hall Academy. See page 6.	• Employment-based, full-time courses, based on a specific sector, e.g., accounting, engineering, business, art & design, health & social care, computing, construction, travel, etc.; • BTECs will be phased out by 2030, with some courses being phased out much sooner where a comparable T Level exists; • The qualification will always hold its value and can be used as an entry requirement to university or higher apprenticeships at any time in the future; • In the meantime, these courses are challenging in terms of deadlines and coursework (independent study); • Colleges have specialised resources and equipment relevant to students' learning; • Should be considered if the student is ready for a step-change in how they learn, and/or a change of environment; • Colleges have excellent links to industry; • Colleges have a much broader range of students of all backgrounds and ages; • Extended Level 3 BTEC courses will ask for a minimum of 4-5 GCSE passes, including English and maths; • Student needs a responsible approach and be ready for independent study in an adult-like environment; • Student will have to know which area of employment they wish to enter; • Post 18 options are employment, university, higher or degree level apprenticeships.



Pathways	Description
LEVEL 3 QUALIFICATION Apprenticeships Students can apply for apprenticeships through the Government website, through a college or through the organisation itself on its <i>early careers</i> or <i>vacancy</i> web pages. See page 13 for more information.	• Student works 4 days per week and attends college or a training centre 1 day per week (day release); • Student will have to know which area of employment they wish to enter; • The application and assessment process can be rigorous with students often competing for 1 position; • The employer will expect the student to have achieved a minimum pass in GCSE English and maths; • The employer pays the student a salary (varies from minimum wage to approximately 15K pa); • Advanced apprenticeships (post-16) can lead to full time employment or higher/degree level apprenticeships (where the employer pays for the student's degree); • Apprenticeships are competitive and very sought after; • Students will be required to have a strong application/CV; • The student may sometimes be required to complete a short traineeship (approximately 20 weeks) before a Level 3 apprenticeship to prepare them for the world of work; • Post-18 options are employment or higher or degree level apprenticeships.



Pathways		Description
LEVEL 3 QUALIFICATION	<u>T Levels</u> College - see page 6.	• T Levels are employment-based courses where the student is at college 80% of the time and on (unpaid) work placement 20% of the time; • Examples of T Level courses include Surveying, Civil Engineering, Health, Education & Childcare, Digital Production, Design & Development... • One T Level is equivalent to 3 A Levels, or 3 V Levels; • T Levels courses will ask for a minimum of 5 GCSE passes (at grade 5 or above), including English and maths; • Student will have to know which area of employment they wish to enter; • Established in 2020 due to demand from employers for more employability skills; • Range of courses available is somewhat limited but increasing year on year; • If a student is considering employment post-18, and there is a relevant course available, this should be a serious contender; • Post T-Level options are employment, university, higher or degree level apprenticeships.

Pathways		
LEVEL 3 QUALIFICATION	<u>V Levels</u> College and some sixth forms - see page 6.	HOT OFF THE PRESS! • V Levels are vocational qualifications which will be available from September 2027 with the first round of courses covering digital systems, education & early years, and finance & accounting; • Students can select 3 separate V Levels, each equivalent to 1 A Level, or choose to study a mix of V Levels and A Levels (for example, 2 V Levels and 1 A Level, or 1 V Level and 2 A Levels); • Where there is a comparable T Level, Extended BTECs will be immediately phased out, with the remaining BTEC courses being phased out over the next 3 years and replaced entirely by T Level and V Level courses; • Future rollout of V Levels will include creative, design and travel subjects • Post V-Level options are employment, university, higher or degree level apprenticeships.



Sixth Form or College?

Differences you may not be aware of...	
Your Current Sixth Form	College
• A Level/academic study, with option to take a single or double BTEC subject • It's important to know you love the subject and know you're good at it (working at Grade 6 or Merit level) • Sixth form is an extension of school – Y11, 12, 13... • Greater familiarity with teachers and the school environment • Dress code – smart/business attire • You will have form tutors and morning registration every day at 8.40am • Expect to be in school during study periods	• A Levels, and employment-based courses including full-time BTECs; T Levels and apprenticeships • Adult-like environment – you might even call your lecturers by their first names • Larger building and greater/more varied body of students • Dedicated departments with specialised resources • Lecturers will get to know you – perhaps a fresh start would benefit you? • You choose how you manage your free time • You choose how you dress
Which one works for you?	

What if I don't achieve a Grade 4 in English and maths?

1. You can enrol on a Level 2 course at college and retake your exams. The Level 2 course will last 1 year, after which time you can apply for a Level 3 course, T Level or an advanced apprenticeship.
2. You can apply for an intermediate apprenticeship and retake your exams (in exceptional situations, some organisations will consider your application to do a Level 3 apprenticeship, however, you will need an outstanding application, and you will have to commit to retaking these exams to continue with the course).
3. You can [study part-time at college and retake these exams](#). However, you must also work part-time or volunteer part-time.
4. You can enrol on a [Foundation Learning](#) course.



Sixth Forms and Colleges

Solihull College Two campuses - Blossomfield and Woodlands
Solihull Sixth Form College
Stratford Upon Avon College (Part of Solihull College & University Centre organisation)
WCG (Warwickshire College Group) Includes Warwick Trident College, Leamington Spa College and Moreton Morrell College
UCB (University College Birmingham)
WMG Engineering Academy Two campuses based in Solihull and Coventry
BOA (Birmingham Ormiston Academy)
Arden Sixth Form
Access Creative College
BMet (Birmingham Metropolitan College) Includes Matthew Boulton College, James Watt College, Sutton Coldfield College, Erdington Skills Centre
South & City College
Other school sixth forms – includes Park Hall Academy, St. Peter’s RC Sixth Form, Lode Heath School...
Grammar sixth forms – includes Stratford Girls, Alcester, includes Bishop Vesey Grammar, Sutton Coldfield Grammar, King Edward VI Five Ways, King Edwards VI Camp Hill...
Private schools – includes Solihull School, Bromsgrove School, Kings High School for Girls...
Sports Academies – Access Sports College , Warwickshire Institute of Sports (Aspire2Be) , Pro Direct Academy
SEN schools – Forest Oak , Hereward , Arnold Lodge (Fee paying)

Making Decisions

- What are you passionate about?
- [What values do you have? What matters to you?](#)
- What [skills](#) do you have? Are you a team-worker, analytically minded, a natural leader, communicator, persuader, solution-oriented, creative?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses? Are you resilient, flexible, detail-oriented, determined?
- What are your likes and dislikes? Do you like being with people or working alone? Do you like being the centre of attention? Do you like being creative?
- What are you good at? Reassuring friends, motivating team members, seeing the big picture?
- What kind of environment do you want to work in? Office, care setting, outdoors...? Have a go at the [Unifrog](#) Work Environment Quiz and find out more
- **Are you choosing your pathway, or is someone else making the decision for you?**
- Imagine yourself in 10 years' time... what advice would you give yourself now?
- Is tunnel vision preventing you from exploring other pathways which might be more suited to you?
- Are you limiting your future pathways because you [lack confidence](#) or perhaps you don't want to be different?
- Are you [worried about experiencing a new environment](#) and fitting in?
- Do you think employers favour certain qualifications? (Employers value skills)
- Which mode of study are you most likely to excel at?
- Are you aware of alternative routes to achieve your end goal?
- How informed are you?
- How informed are those you listen to?
- Are you listening to expert advice?
- Have you done enough research?

Become more mindful; forget about what others are doing; write down your thoughts; talk about it; begin your research; make notes, list the [pros and cons of each option](#), carry out a SWOT analysis...

Job Research and Labour Market Information

- National Careers Service – Explore Careers
 - <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/explore-careers>
- What can you do with your degree?
 - <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/what-can-i-do-with-my-degree>
- Not going to university?
 - <https://notgoingtouni.co.uk/>
- Jobs & Careers - Study Work Grow
 - <https://studyworkgrow.com/category/work/jobs-careers/>
- All About School Leavers
 - <https://www.allaboutschoollleavers.co.uk/>
- Careerometer – compare salaries, working hours, growth...
 - <https://www.careerpilot.org.uk/information/careerometer>
- Career Ideas and Information for Your Future
 - <https://icould.com/>
- Jobs by Subject
 - <https://www.careerpilot.org.uk/job-sectors/subjects>
- Jobs by Sector
 - <https://www.careerpilot.org.uk/job-sectors/sectors>
- Jobs by YOUR Values
 - <https://www.careerpilot.org.uk/job-sectors/strengths-and-values>
- UCAS Careers Advice
 - <https://www.ucas.com/careers-advice>
- Unifrog – Careers Library and Subject Library
 - www.unifrog.org
- YouTube – Search “day in the life of a _____”
- Indeed – current job advertisements (check out the requirements)
 - <https://uk.indeed.com/>

Matching Your Personality and Interests to Jobs



So, you think you want to be a lawyer, but you hate reading. Or, perhaps you want to be an engineer but you're not interested in how things work... Maybe you like coming up with ideas and working in teams, but you're not sure how this relates to a job...



Linking Jobs to YOU

Often, students will only consider jobs they know about. What if your perfect job is one you've never heard of? What if the job you're considering is not right for you? Perhaps learning more about a job will motivate you to work harder? Learn more and make informed decisions.

Know more about yourself...

- [Unifrog Quizzes](#)
 - **Personality** (matches your personality type to careers)
 - **Interests** (matches your hobbies and interests to careers)
 - **Work Environment** (matches careers to your preferred working environment, e.g., outdoors, office, busy, quiet, etc.)
 - **Skills** (matches your skills to careers, e.g., leadership, teamwork, attentive, etc.)
 - If you do them all, then click on Favourites, and then Quiz Profile – it will match jobs based on Personality, Interests, Work Environments, AND Skills! Making the results a little more bespoke.
 - See which jobs it matches for you and select 2 or 3 which are of particular interest – are there college courses which link to these jobs?
- <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/discover-your-skills-and-careers/>
- <https://www.ucas.com/careers-quiz>
- <http://makeitquiz.bbcnitechops.co.uk/>
- <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/planner>
- Have a go at 1 or 2 quizzes and see if there is any correlation...
- **Any surprises?**

Search jobs by Subject

Why am I learning trigonometry?

- Structural engineers use trigonometry to measure the height of buildings
- Trigonometry was used to design Super Mario video games

Do I really need to know about WWI?

- Understanding WWI helps us interpret geopolitical situations as they occur in real time, which is useful in careers such as law, politics, diplomacy, military and teaching

Why is punctuation so important?

- Written communication occurs in all jobs, whether it's writing reports or reading emails or instruction manuals. Good spelling, punctuation and grammar ensures information is communicated accurately.

Who cares about Art?

- Designers, architects, photographers, animators, illustrators, game designers all care about art.

<https://careerswales.gov.wales/job-information/subjects>

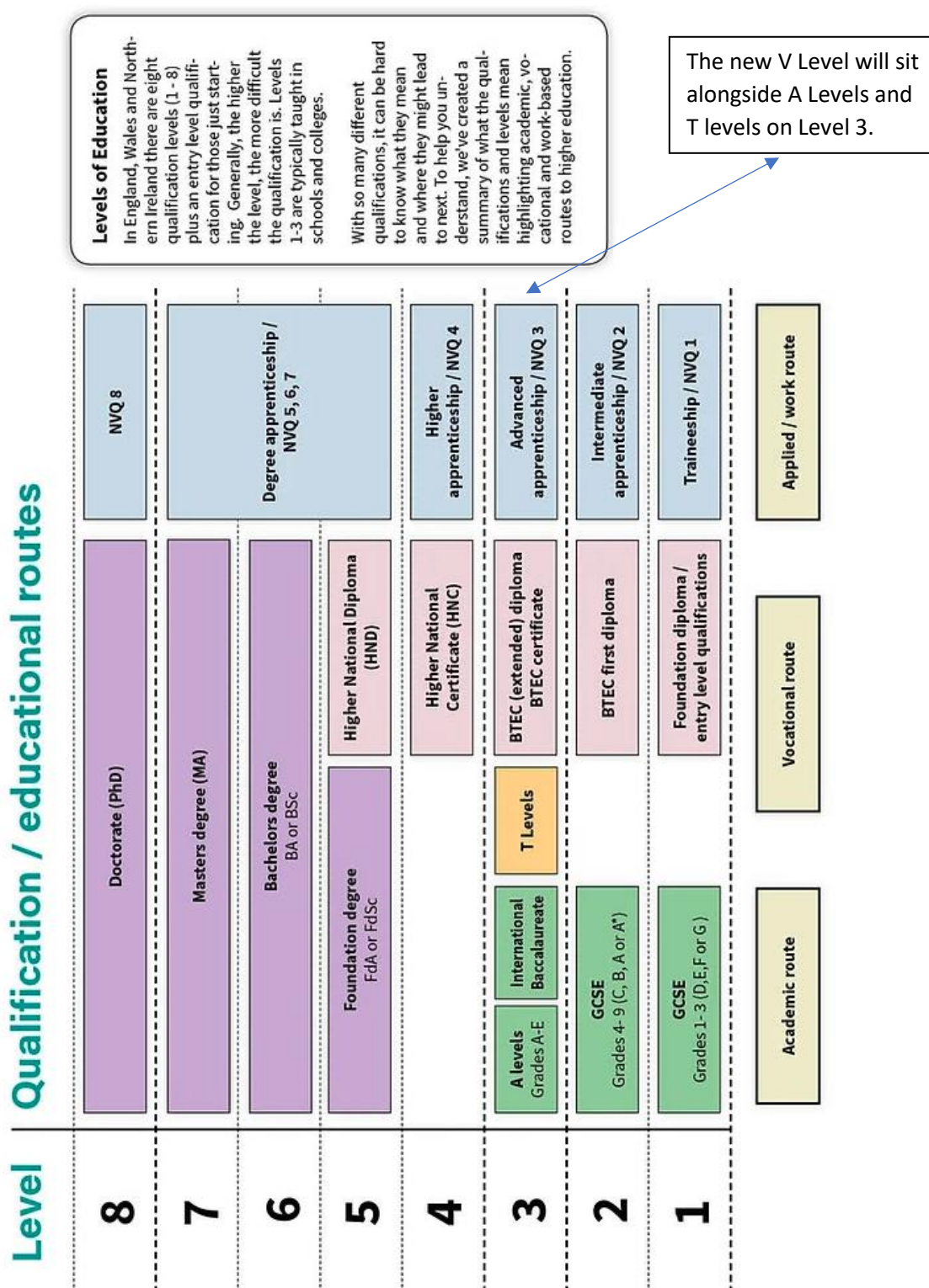
<https://www.careerpilot.org.uk/job-sectors/subjects>



Qualifications

A qualification shows employers, teachers and learners what you have learnt and what you can do as a result of that learning. There is a large variety of qualifications available so they are grouped together into levels to show how they compare and what other qualifications they can lead to.

Different qualifications exist within the same level. They are equivalent to one another – this means that one is not better or higher than the other. For example, A Levels, Extended BTECs and T Levels are all Level 3 qualifications. Which one you choose depends on your style of learning or chosen career path.



Employability Skills

As well as qualifications, employers will look at employability skills. It's very possible you already have employability skills. For example, you might captain your football team (leadership, motivation); you might be taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award (resilience, commitment, determination, teamwork); or you might be helping out at drama club (creativity, initiative, communication). There are other ways to gain employability skills:

- Work experience
- Part-time work
- Volunteering
- Internships
- In-person or online work events

Circle which skills you have, and think about how you can prove this?

Which skills do you need to work on?

Communication	Confidence	Organisation	Teamwork	Flexibility	Problem Solving
Critical thinking	Persuasiveness	IT Literate	Analytical	Listening	Numerate
Detail-oriented	Resilient	Determination	Creativity	Initiative	Leadership
Responsibility	Willingness to learn	Decision-making	Focus	Open-mindedness	Conscientious

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/how-to-develop-your-soft-skills>

<https://www.mypathcareersuk.com/employability-skills-what-do-you-mean>

Apprenticeships

The most common way to find apprenticeships is via the government website linked below. You can also search for apprenticeships via a college website or an organisation's website.

Applying for an apprenticeship is a bit like applying for a job. **It's competitive.** There may be 20 or perhaps 100s of students applying for the same apprenticeship. That's why it's important to have a stand-out CV, **and don't forget to talk about those Employability Skills.**

If Apprenticeships are a serious contender for you, ask yourself what will my school reference look like? Your employer will ask us about your attitude, attendance and punctuality. What do you think we will say? Are there any changes you need to make in order to get a glowing reference?

The application process will differ, however, as a guide you should expect to:

- (a) submit an application or CV before a given deadline!
- (b) take part in a telephone or face-to-face interview
- (c) attend an assessment centre, where group activities and role play activities are observed
- (d) attend a final face-to-face interview
- (e) receive written or verbal communication confirming you have been successful/unsuccessful
- (f) if successful, receive confirmation of terms of employment, and starts dates, etc.

This is a test of motivation, resilience, and determination. Be prepared and don't forget to ask for help and guidance!

Type of Apprenticeship	Level	Equivalent to...
Intermediate	2	GCSEs
Advanced	3	A Levels
Higher	4, 5, 6 & 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

This is the level you are aiming for

<https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices>

<https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/influencers/what-is-an-apprenticeship>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-and-degree-apprenticeships>



George Clarke
Apprentice
Architect



Karren Brady
Advertising
Apprentice



Jamie Oliver
Apprentice
Chef



Karen Millen
Fashion
Apprentice

What do you want your FUTURE to look like?

You in 10 years' time...	I'm not bothered about this	I suppose this would be nice?	I really want this for my future!	This is my future and I will achieve this!	Does your current work ethic match your future goals?
Living independently You can afford to rent or buy your own home					YES / NO
Financially secure You can support yourself and pay the bills					YES / NO
Family You can support your own family					YES / NO
Influence and Power You are a decision-maker and leader					YES / NO
Fame and Recognition You are recognised for your work					YES / NO
Luxury You can buy luxury items, e.g., luxury car, designer goods, home improvements, gym membership, subscriptions, etc					YES / NO
Respect You are an expert in your field and respected for your work					YES / NO
Explore the World You can travel – with your work, and/or for leisure					YES / NO
Passion You are working in an area which inspires you and makes you feel happy and fulfilled					YES / NO
Other?					YES / NO

Is there more you could do?

Is there more you should know?

Tops Tips

- Understand *you don't know what you don't know*... Do your research, understand the jobs market, ask questions, attend events, find out as much as you can
- You're about to enter a competitive market – is it time you upped your game?
- Check your last Progress Review Report – is there a gap between your working-at grades and target grades? If there is, what are you going to do about it?
- Become familiar with the jobs market. As well as the links on page 8, explore [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com) (for current job listings), and YouTube and Tok-tok (search “a day in the life of....”)
- Build a CV now using Unifrog's CV/Resume builder. You can edit it as you gain more experience and become more skilled
- Ask your Futures Team for help, support and guidance; [refer yourself for a 1:1 guidance session](#)
- Attend work insight events; already students are networking and planning careers based off this!
- Learn from those around you, but make sure you make your own decisions based on your personality, likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses (see page 7, Making Decisions)
- Know yourself – what are your skills? Try the quizzes linked on page 9; ask friends and family how they would describe you
- Don't follow the crowd – most of them don't know where they are going either!
- Too cool for school? If this is you, know that your peers are working hard and attending work-related events and career insights; they now have the advantage...
- Work hard – you've got one shot at this. How engaged are you during lessons? Do you complete homework? What if you miss valuable content? How will this impact you during an exam? How will your results impact your post-16 plans?
- It's been proven that a 5% drop in attendance equals nearly 50 missed lessons over a year and this could cost you a whole grade at GCSE. What impact will this have on your post-16 plans? If this is a concern, check your percentage attendance now
- You want money and success but you don't want to study? Understand that successful people work hard
- You want to be happy and have a fulfilling job? Then know your options and follow your pathway, not someone else's!

You will be seen at some point during the course of Year 10/11. However, you can [refer](#) yourself for careers guidance counselling at any time, or visit the Futures Hub to find out how or email the school Careers Guidance Counsellor, Mrs Butcher-Johns on sbutcherjohns@parkhall.org



Mrs Churchill, Assistant Headteacher & Careers Lead

Mrs Butcher-Johns, Careers Guidance Counsellor

sbutcherjohns@parkhall.org

Don't you just hate a blank back page?

We do too, so we thought we'd give you some inspirational quotes...

"The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet." – Aristotle

"Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today." – Malcolm X

"Education is the key to unlocking the world, a passport to freedom." – Oprah Winfrey

"The road to freedom – here and everywhere on earth – begins in the classroom." – Hubert Humphrey

"I'm not telling you it's going to be easy- I'm telling you it's going to be worth it."
– Art Williams

"Although no one can go back and make a brand-new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand-new ending." – Carl Bard

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." - *Thomas A. Edison*

"Dreams are extremely important. You can't do it unless you imagine it." -
George Lucas

