

# CHOOSING A SCHOOL

*Which pathway is right for me?*



## INTRODUCTION

We often hear that life after high school needs to involve a college or university education in order to be successful. However, for some people, a technical or vocational school may be a better fit. It's all about **what you want to do and both pathways are valid!**

### What if I don't know what I want?

That's okay! You can use this guide as something to help get you to a starting point. What you want to do with your life may change. It's rare that anyone growing up knows exactly what they want to do for the rest of their lives. **But that doesn't mean you can't get started along one pathway.** The worst that can happen is that you learn what you don't like, and that process of elimination can be really valuable in helping you find out your ultimate goal and pathway.

### Why colleges/universities and trade schools only?

While your options aren't limited to just college/universities and career/vocational/trade schools, that's what our information here will focus on. This is the information that we know best and that directly relates to two of our biggest shareholder programs: The **Olgoonik Foundation Scholarship** and **Olgoonik Foundation Training Program**.

We hope this guide helps you figure out where you'd like to start or, if you've already made your decision, reaffirm that your choice is the right one for you.

## TIPS FOR THIS GUIDE:

- This isn't the only information available to you! You can (and should) do your own research to learn the most you can about your options. There's *so much* information out there.
- Some information contains **links** to websites where you can find more information. We recommend using this guide electronically to best take advantage of this feature.
- This is one guide of a series from Shareholder Services that cover topics including choosing a school, degree types, training, and financial aid.
- For questions or more information, contact the **Olgoonik Shareholder Services team** in the Anchorage or Wainwright office. You can also email: [shareholderservices@olgoonik.com](mailto:shareholderservices@olgoonik.com).

## Figuring Out a Pathway: What to ask yourself

Choosing the right school is important. If you're attending school in-person, you'll spend a lot of time there, including possibly living on or near campus. If you're interested in distance education, some schools are better for that than others. Regardless, choosing a **school can be a big commitment**. Whether you know what you want to do or if you're still deciding, it can be helpful to **ask yourself the following questions to help you make the best choice** for yourself:

### About Yourself

- How you like to learn.
- What subjects and topics you're interested in.
- What career you think you're interested in.
- If you're in this for yourself or because someone else wants you to do it.
- What your goals are.

### About Your Education

- What kind of qualifications are needed for your prospective career.
- If the program and school you're considering will prepare you for gainful employment in a recognized occupation.
- If you want to earn college credit. (FYI - even if you don't want to work towards a degree right now, many vocational training and apprenticeship programs allow students to earn college credit.)

### About Your Potential School

- If the school has programs to support Native students or have a strong Native presence.
- What your safe, affordable housing options are.
- What your safe, reliable transportation options are.
- If the school has programs and courses of interest.
- If you can meet the school's application requirements.
- If the school has sports, clubs, and other programs that interest you.
- If the school is located outside of your community, are you able to visit early to learn about campus and the area?
- If the school/training institution is accredited.
- If the school offers distance education and online courses if you don't want to leave your community.

### About Your Support System

- If you know anyone you can talk to about your options.
- If you think you would work better with a mentor to help along the way.
- If you have someone to support you when you get homesick.
- If someone can help with school and aid applications.

### About Paying for It

- If your school accepts federal financial aid.
- If you have your own financial resources you can (or want to) contribute.
- If you know your private, state, and federal financial aid options.



## Choosing a School: Understanding types of schools

There are so many options for schooling available, both within Alaska and outside, that it can make choosing a school difficult. It's important to know what kinds of schools there are so you fully understand your options because not every school offers the same programs and degree types. Which school may be best for you can really depend on what pathway you want to take and what possible careers you're interested in.



### Tribal Colleges & Universities

Tribal Colleges & Universities (TCUs) are great options for students, especially Native students. TCUs are learning institutions that often offer lower tuition rates to students. TCUs are federally and tribally chartered schools and are usually accredited (or candidates for accreditation).

Although many TCUs have an "open policy" (meaning, they allow non-Tribal members to enroll), Indigenous values and education from that school's Tribe are often a big part of the school's culture and values.

Smaller TCUs may provide certificate and associates programs and vocational education options only. Larger TCUs may offer associate, bachelor and master-level programs. For student's in Alaska, particularly those in North Slope communities, you may be most familiar with Ilisagvik College, Alaska's first and only tribal college.



### Interested in learning more about TCUs?

Ilisagvik College, Alaska's only tribal college:

- <https://www.ilisagvik.edu/programs/>

American Indian College Fund - TCU Information:

- <https://collegefund.org/students/tribal-colleges/>

### 2-Year Colleges

Community colleges and junior colleges are often referred to as "2-year schools" because they typically don't offer beyond associate degrees, which take two years to complete when attending full-time. Credits earned at these schools are often transferable to a university for a bachelor's degree. Tuition also tends to be less expensive, making the overall cost towards a degree more affordable for many students.

These schools often have technical and vocational programs, alongside regular academic programs. For example, Prince William Sound College (PWSC) in Valdez offers a Millwright Occupational Endorsement Certificate and a Nursing A.A.S.. Kenai Peninsula College (KPC) in Soldotna offers programs in Process Technology, Welding, Paramedic, Medical Imaging, Instrumentation, Firefighter I, and a Petroleum Production occupational endorsement certificate. Common non-technical degrees include areas like Accounting & Business, Art, Anthropology, Communications, and Psychology.

## Choosing a School: Understanding types of schools (continued)

Interested in learning more about 2-year colleges? Visit:

CollegeBoard, Community College FAQs

- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/how-to-find-your-college-fit/community-college-faqs>

National Society of High School Scholars - Community College vs. University

- <https://www.nshss.org/blog/community-college-vs-university-pros-and-cons-of-cost-class-size-and-student-experience/>

### 4-Year Colleges & Universities

A lot of the time you'll hear "college" and "university" used interchangeably, however 4-year colleges are typically **larger schools that focus more on bachelor's-level and graduate degree programs.**

Some universities, like those in the University of Alaska system (UAA, UAF, UAS) do still offer associate and certificate programs. Still, larger schools like Queens University of Charlotte, Portland State University, and Fort Lewis College (all schools that **Olgoonik Corporation shareholders and descendants like you** have attended) focus on bachelor's level degrees and higher.



### Trade & Vocational Schools

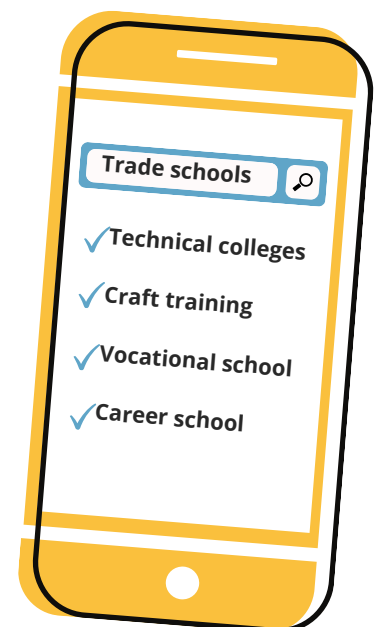
Trade and vocational schools are great options for students who want **more hands-on learning.** As mentioned previously, two-year colleges like PWSC and KPC and TCUs often have technical education options, but there are also stand-alone institutions that focus only on certain trades/vocations. These are schools like **AVTEC** and **Northern Industrial Training (NIT)** in Alaska, as well as schools in the Lower 48 like **Midwest Technical Institute, Universal Technical Institute,** and **Erwin Technical College.**

More about trade, vocational, and career schools:

- ✓ Schools vary in size (smaller in AK, small-large in the Lower 48)
- ✓ Certificates/certifications and endorsements common, some offer other degree types as well
- ✓ Programs train students for high-demand trade careers
- ✓ Programs prepare students to become workforce ready

Interested in learning more? Visit:

- <https://www.accreditedschoolsonline.org/vocational-trade-school/careers/>



# Choosing a School: Understanding types of schools (continued)

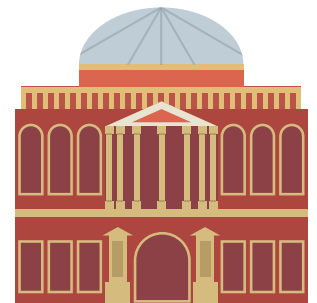
## For-Profit, Non-Profit, and Public v.s Private

Students should consider whether a school is **for-profit**, **non-profit**, a **public** school, or a **private** school when weighing options.

### So what's the difference?

- ✓ **For-profit** schools operate like other businesses that strive to make a profit for their investors. Because these schools are economically driven, sometimes important functions (education improvements, resources, etc.) are reduced, cut, or tuition costs are increased.

If you're considering a for-profit school, do your research and **look for schools that are accredited** by a state, regional, or national accrediting institution and that offers programs that prepare students for **gainful employment**.



- ✓ **Non-profit** schools reinvest any money earned (by tuition, fees, etc.) back into education and to support academics. Non-profit schools can still worry about money, but because of their education focus, they tend to more reliably provide quality education, instructors, and programs. Non-profit schools can be either public or private, relying on government funding or private donors and endowments to operate.
- ✓ **Public schools** are those that are owned by the state or receives a significant amount of public funding to operate. The University of Alaska system (UAA, UAF, and UAS) is funded by the State of Alaska and is therefore subject to the same ups and downs as other state entities. The Governor of Alaska can cut funding to these schools and to help make up the difference, the schools can pass costs on to students in the form of increased tuition and fees or it can cut academic and extracurricular programs.
- ✓ **Private schools** are primarily funded by private donors, endowments, and through the tuition costs students pay. Because of this, private school **tuition is comparably higher** than publicly funded schools. At the same time, private schools also have a reputation for their **quality of education**.

In the US, Harvard University in Massachusetts is one of the most well-known and prominent private universities. As of 2019, Harvard lists it's endowment on its website as totaling \$40.9 billion (yes, *billion* with a B). Alaska's best-known private university is Alaska Pacific University, a private liberal arts school in Anchorage.

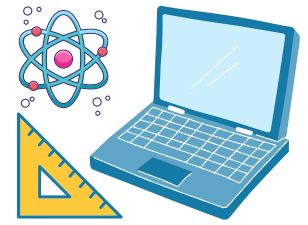
Interested in learning more about the types of schools out there? Check out:

- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/types-of-colleges-the-basics>

# A Jump Start on Careers: Technical education in high school

**Can a career path and training start in high school? Yes!**

Career and technical high schools exist! These schools can be a good option for students who want to jump-start their careers in a chosen field or for students who prefer more hands-on learning.



Some students may have to transfer school districts to attend. Because doing so is a big change, it's best to talk with a parent or guardian when considering options like these two Alaska-based technical high schools:

## King Tech High School (KTHS)

Part of the Anchorage School District, KTHS accepts full-time **11th and 12th grade students by a lottery**, meaning students have to apply and be selected to attend full-time. Students attending part-time don't need to apply, but do need to work with their school counselor to request to take courses at the school.

KTHS students can **earn dual credit with University of Alaska schools** for various programs, making this a cost effective way to get a head start on a future college degree. The school offers a variety of programs, including:



- Advertising, Art, Design
- Auto Maintenance
- Aviation Maintenance
- Aviation Tech.
- Carpentry
- Construction Electricity
- Cosmetology
- EMT
- Film & AV Production
- Information Technology

## Galena Interior Learning Academy (GILA)

GILA is a **residential boarding school** (similar to Mt. Edgecumbe High School) that focuses on vocational education. GILA accepts **students grades 9-12 and provides airfare to/from Galena** at the start and end of the school year. They provide a variety of sports and activities (including basketball, swimming, and Native Youth Olympics) and their vocational education programs include:

- Applied Mechanics
- Drone Aviation
- Health Science
- Cosmetology
- Construction
- Media & Information Technology

It's important to know that **these aren't the only options available to students**. There's also the Mat-Su Career and Technical High School in Wasilla, Alaska and many schools offer **On-the-Job Training (OJT)** options for students. Participating in OJT can be a great option for students to see careers within their communities, gain experience, and earn credit.

## Other Tools & Resources For Your Future

**Still wanting to learn more?** There's a *ton* of resources out there that can help you find and narrow down your options. Check out some of our favorite resources listed below!

### College & Campus Life

- CollegeBoard: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/campus-life>
  - What to expect from campus, handling culture shock, and what dorm life is really like

### Transferring from a 2-Year College to a 4-Year College:

- BigFuture: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/tips-on-college-transferring-from-a-2-year-to-a-4-year-college>
  - Informational video and tips on transferring schools

### Find Colleges and Career Schools

- College Navigator: <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>
  - Search for schools by state, major, award level, and school type
- College Scorecard: <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>
  - Find and compare schools or search for schools by field of study
- Training Provider: <https://www.trainingproviderresults.gov/#!/>
  - Find vocation/trade school programs, view completion rates, and employment information
- Occupation Finder: <https://www.onetonline.org/find/>
  - Find occupations and search by level of education needed
- Career One Stop: <https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-local-training.aspx?newsearch=true>
  - Find training institutions and search by program or location



### Questions to Ask About Your School

- Choosing a College: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0395-choosing-college-questions-ask>
  - Questions to consider before picking a college
- Choosing a Vocational School: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0241-choosing-vocational-school>
  - Questions to consider before choosing a vocation/trade school

**For questions, to request additional information, or to suggest additions and changes, please contact:**

[shareholderservices@olgoonik.com](mailto:shareholderservices@olgoonik.com)

Anchorage: (907) 562-8728  
Wainwright: (907) 763-2613

