



Inspire. Educate. Connect.

Cloud Coach | Gateway Prompts – Track 2

Track 2 Gateway Prompts are designed for the typical student participating in Cloud Coach. You may find after Week 1 that your student might be a better fit for Track 1, designed for students who may need more support, or a better fit for Track 3, designed for accelerated learners. At any point, you can move between the tracks to find the right message to send your student.

Table of Contents

Click to Navigate.

Using the Gateway Prompts

[Week One: Perception of School](#)

Week Two: Areas of Interest/Passion

Week Three: Future Goals

Week Four: Exploring Skills Aligned to Goals

Week Five: Setting Short-Term Goals

Week Six: Developing Your Personal Brand

Week Seven: Review Key Themes

Week Eight: Validate and Affirm Your Student

Welcome to Track 2 of the Cloud Coach Gateway Prompts.

The Gateway Prompts were developed in partnership with Search Institute, a nationally recognized research firm that specializes in youth development. Aside from Search, we have received input from educators, professionals, and mentors such as yourselves to make the Gateway Prompts as dynamic and user-friendly as possible.

We understand that every mentor-mentee relationship is unique. By giving you these Prompts, we are not trying to standardize every interaction you have with your mentee. This is not a script. However, we do want to make sure you follow these prompts as closely as comfortable. You'll notice we recommend three paragraphs as the standard length of a message. Many of the Prompts encourage you to add well more than three paragraph's worth of content. It is up to you to determine the best length and content to include in your message, always with the goal of getting across as much of the spirit of our weekly topic as possible. When in doubt, remember our motto: Think Forward, Act Now.

The Gateway Prompts actively encourage you to ask questions of your mentee. Remember, this is a two-way conversation, and we want you *and* your student to feel comfortable sharing your thoughts and feelings. A well-posed question can help generate more thoughtful responses. That said, not every student will participate each week. Cloud Coach is unique in that it serves an entire 9th grade population. We expect to have diversity of ability and interest. If your mentee is slow to respond, don't give up! Teachers consistently tell us that students read the messages their mentors send. Your participation is always valuable.

Finally, know that you are free to switch Tracks at any point in the program. The different Tracks are designed to engage with each student appropriately. If you think your mentee is ready for a more rigorous conversation, switch to Track 3. If your mentee needs more support or has trouble writing consistently, switch to Track 1.

If you have questions about the Gateway Prompts, reach out to your dedicated BestPrep coordinator. If you're unsure who that is, you can always reach us at: cloudcoachemails@bestprep.org.

Thank you and have fun!

Exchange Week 1 – Perspectives on School
Objective
Get to know your student by first learning how they feel about school. Knowing this early will help you decide which track to take in future conversations.
Week 1 Lead Question
<i>I'm excited to be paired with you in the Cloud Coach program and am looking forward to getting to know you. I know you started high school during a pandemic, how is it going so far? How are classes going? Which one do you like the most? What do you like about high school so far?</i>
Introducing Yourself
<p><u>Share basic information:</u> Start by sharing your name and pronouns. Consider including where you grew up, if you have a partner, children, or pets, and what you like to do in your free time.</p> <p><u>Share more about your job:</u> Share your title and brief description of your role. Avoid technical language and acronyms. Remember, students may not have a strong concept of your field. Consider including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How your role/job/organization may have changed since the pandemic and how you're adjusting • An example of a task you perform regularly • A way your role is similar to schoolwork or extracurricular activities • An invitation for any questions they may have
Week 1 Talking Points
<p><u>Share your story:</u> Tell your student about your 9th grade/high school experience. Were you involved in any activities, sports, or work? What was your favorite subject? Share more about the type of high school student you were – were you highly motivated? Did you hate school? Was 9th grade a stand-out year for you in any way?</p> <p><u>Keep your first message to three paragraphs or less:</u> Some students will be overwhelmed by a long message, while others will be excited for the challenge – stick to three paragraphs (or less) until you learn more about your student. If you have more than three paragraphs of material, choose which content is the most important and edit down to three paragraphs.</p>

Research and Rationale

Understanding how a student feels about school can shape the tone of future messages. If a student is struggling in school, you will probably offer different advice than you would to a student who is excelling. For example, if a student mentions school being difficult, you may want to think about how you can connect their interests and the effort they put into that interest, to school. Also, instead of focusing primarily on post-secondary education, you may want to talk about more immediate goals, like passing the 9th grade and even graduating high school.

If a student is excelling in school, you may want to talk about post-secondary education more frequently than graduating high school. After week 1, you'll get a sense for the type of student you're working with to determine if your messages should be longer and more detailed, or shorter and more to the point. This will also clue you in as to which direction the conversation will take.

Exchange Week 2 - Areas of Interest/Passion
Objective
Continue to get to know your student and find out their interests, passions, and/or hobbies.
Following Up from Week 1
<p><u>Validate your student’s thoughts on school:</u> Share your reaction to their comments. Are you impressed? Do you empathize? Do you have a follow up question? If your student talked about how hard school is in a virtual setting, validate those feelings. If your student seems to be thriving, provide a way-to-go or kudos message about being able to adjust to the new environment.</p> <p><u>Find common ground:</u> If you can relate to their experience in any way, share your story. Your example could be current and work-centric or relate back to your high school years. (Example: if they are struggling to get along with a teacher, maybe you’ve struggled to get along with a supervisor).</p> <p><u>If you didn’t get a response/the response is too short to follow up:</u> Start your message by sharing that you’re still excited to partner with your student for this program and hope they get a chance to read your Week 1 message. This may be a good time to move to Track 1 until your student responds or their responses get longer.</p> <p><u>If you get a detailed, thorough response from a student who loves school:</u> You may consider moving to Track 3, which is designed for accelerated learners.</p>
Week 2 Lead Question
<i>I’m interested in learning more about you. Tell me more about yourself. When you’re not working on school, what are you mainly spending your time on? What do you like to do with your time outside of school?</i>
Week 2 Talking Points
<p><u>Share your own deep interests, passions, and/or hobbies:</u> Explain how this interest helps you or has made you stronger in your job or everyday life. (For example, if your deep interest is a sport, this may have made you more of a team player.) Share how you first became interested in this.</p>

Week 2 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Lead Question). This week, you might ask:

- What is your favorite sport, movie, or band and why?
- What is the best part about your life right now?

Gateway Prompts

[Gateway Track 1 Prompt](#)
[Gateway Track 3 Prompt](#)

Research and Rationale

Research conducted at Search Institute has shown that when a young person has a deep interest or passion in their life (what Search Institute calls the young person's *spark*), they are much more likely to succeed at school and much less likely to participate in risky behaviors such as using drugs or alcohol. Search Institute's national studies have shown that the most common sparks of teenagers today are sports, performing arts, and technology, but sparks also come in many other forms, like taking care of animals, reading, working, or improving the environment (Benson and Scales, 2009).

Knowing your student's interests is a great way to build a relationship and to acknowledge an area of their life in which they work hard and feel a sense of accomplishment. Knowing their spark could provide insight into their lives, and can give you a better idea of the person they are, or hope to become. In future message exchanges, their spark can be leveraged to connect school and their future goals.

Exchange Week 3 - Future Goals
Objective
Explore your student’s ideas about their future, including possible careers, interests, and lifestyle.
Follow-Up Ideas to Student’s Response from Week 2
<p><u>Validate your student’s interests/passions:</u> Affirm how cool/exciting/interesting their passion is. If you know a lot about their area of interest, share what you know. If you don’t know much, ask follow-up questions. For example, if your student is into a video game you’ve never heard of, you might ask more about how the game is played.</p> <p><u>If your student says they don’t have any areas of interest:</u> Ask them to share with you what they do when they aren’t working on school. Perhaps they have a job that takes up their free time, or they may do a lot of babysitting. Dig deeper to find out where their time goes.</p> <p><u>If you didn’t get a response/the response is too short to follow up:</u> Start your message by sharing that you’re still excited to partner with your student for this program, and hope they get a chance to read your Week 2 message. This may be a good time to move to Track 1 until your student responds or their responses get longer.</p> <p><u>If your student’s response is detailed and thorough and they’ve already identified a clear career path:</u> Consider moving to Track 3, which is designed for accelerated learners.</p>
Week 3 Lead Questions
<i>During our first two weeks we talked about what you like to do for fun and how you feel about school. This week I want to talk about what life after high school might look like for you. What do you want to do for a job or a career? If you’re not sure exactly what job you want, what would be your dream job if you could do anything?</i>
Week 3 Talking Points
<p><u>Share Your Story:</u> Tell your student about the careers that you were interested in when you were growing up. Share what made those careers interesting to you. If you didn’t end up in that career, what led you to turn in a different direction? If you learned about something you didn’t want to do, how did you come to that conclusion?</p>

Share a personal story that reinforces the importance of effort in school: Was there a subject that you didn't like, but later realized was important to understand, or that you grew interested in? Find other ways to reinforce the importance of sustained effort in school, which is a priority that some 9th graders have yet to understand.

Week 3 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Lead Question). This week, you might ask:

- What jobs/careers do you know about? Could you see yourself doing any of those?
- Who is someone you admire (real or fictional)? What do they do for work?
- Why did you pick that as your dream job?

Gateway Prompts

[Gateway Track 1 Prompt](#)

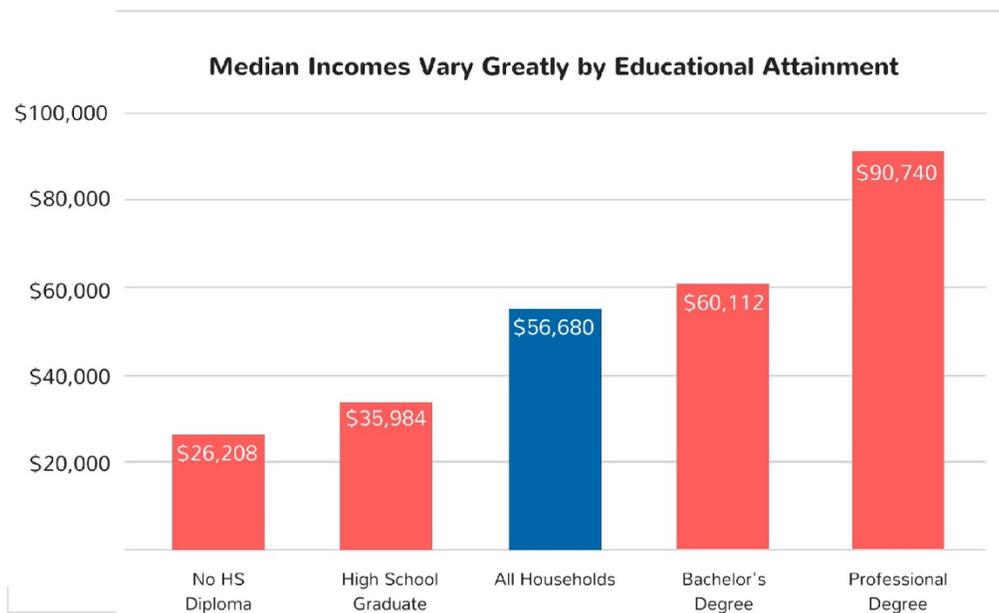
[Gateway Track 3 Prompt](#)

Research and Rationale

An extensive body of research shows that helping young people develop powerful visions of their possible future selves can enhance motivation, effort, and educational outcomes in the present (Oyserman, Terry, and Bybee, 2002; Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry, 2006; Dweck, Walton, Cohen, 2011). Studies also find, however, that while many teenagers today – more than in prior generations – have high goals for the future, they are often unclear about what they need to do to achieve those goals and passive about working hard in the present to achieve them (Schneider and Stevenson, 1999; Rosenbaum and Person, 2003; Damon, 2008). The good news is that other studies have shown that when people are helped to see how their present actions are likely to influence whether or not they achieve their goals (such as getting into a particular type of college or enjoying a relaxing retirement), it can produce significant and positive changes in behavior in the present (Oyserman, 2013). Other researchers have shown that it is especially important to help students who struggle in school understand how educational success will help them achieve their goals for the future – even if those goals don't seem closely connected to the work that students are doing in school at present (Dweck et al., 2011; Hulleman and Harackiewicz, 2009). While these are strong findings from extensive research, it is important to remember that they may not reflect your student's approach to future goals and objectives. Be attentive to what they say in responding to your questions this week so that you are providing feedback that will resonate with your student. This will also be the beginning of the discussion on how they will achieve their goals for the future.

Exchange Week 4 - Exploring Skills Aligned to Goals

Objective
<p>Help your student begin to envision the knowledge, skills, and experiences they will need to succeed.</p>
Follow-Up Ideas to Student's Response from Week 3
<p><u>If your student isn't sure what their dream job is:</u> Ask them if they know what their dream <i>life</i> would look like – where would they like to live? What type of house? Do they want a family?</p>
<p><u>If your student has a vague idea of their dream job:</u> Consider asking them what they like about that field specifically. For instance, if they say they like sports, you might ask if they like playing on a team, watching games, following sports news, etc. Their interest in sports could turn into a career in sports marketing, sports medicine or many other career paths.</p>
<p><u>If your student was able to articulate goals about their future:</u> Acknowledge and validate their goals. Avoid pointing out problems with your student's future goals in this exchange, such as pointing out that they aren't realistic or that your student should have a back-up plan. For example, if your student wants to be an NBA star, but isn't currently playing basketball, you can still validate that this is a huge goal and that you admire their desire to put in the hard work.</p>
<p><u>If your student expresses an interest in college or a career that will need higher education:</u> Tell them about the relationship between education and potential earnings, but be careful to tailor your message to your student. For example, a student who's interested in but unsure of attending a 4-year college could feel motivated by hearing about a jump in income. A student with no plans to attend college may feel unsupported by an explicit push to do so, but can still be reminded that even with a high school diploma, their earning potential rises.</p>
<p><u>If your student doesn't express interest in college:</u> Encourage considering some form of post-secondary education while highlighting the importance and value of a high school education using the graph below.</p>



One of the biggest contributors to rising inequality in America today is the growing earnings gulf between workers with a college degree and those without. Indeed, the median income for a worker with a 4-year college degree was \$60,112 in 2016. By contrast, the median income for a worker with only a High School diploma was just over half as much: \$35,984. There is an even greater income disparity between those with advanced degrees and those with only a High School diploma.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

https://www.bls.gov/emp/education_pays_handout.pdf

If you didn't get a response/the response is too short to follow up: Start your message by stating you hope they get a chance to read your Week 3 message. This may be a good time to move to Track 1 until your student responds or their responses get longer.

If your student's response is detailed and thorough, and they've already identified their higher education needs: Consider moving to Track 3, which is designed for accelerated learners.

Week 4 Lead Question

Now that we've talked about your dream job or future career, what kind of education or training do you think you will need for this career? What skills do you need to be successful in this field?

(Continues below)

Week 4 Talking Points
<p><u>Share what it takes to succeed in your career and/or company:</u> Give your student a sense of the knowledge and skills that are necessary for success in your job. What degree(s) or educational background do you need for your position? What kind of technical knowledge must you have? What kinds of “soft” skills do you need? (If you think your student needs a definition of what a soft skill is, use an example from your personal life to illustrate the concept.)</p>
Week 4 Supporting Questions
<p>Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking <u>at least one question</u> (in addition to the Lead Question). This week, you might ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you think are your most developed skills? What do you want to work on?• Can you think of some ways you might improve those skills?
Gateway Prompts
<p>Gateway Track 1 Prompt</p> <p>Gateway Track 3 Prompt</p>
Research and Rationale
<p>In many American schools today, the emphasis is on mastery of the type of academic knowledge and skill that can be measured on a standardized achievement test. While those abilities are unquestionably important, a large body of research in economics and other disciplines is now demonstrating that what were once thought of as “soft skills” are essential for success in all aspects of life. For example, Nobel Laureate in economics James Heckman and his colleagues have demonstrated that character strengths such as perseverance, sociability, conscientiousness, and curiosity are as influential as IQ in determining performance not only in school but also in the labor market, health outcomes, and incarceration rates (Heckman and Kautz, 2012).</p> <p>In this exchange you have the opportunity to convey the importance of character strengths to your student, which is a message they may not often receive. It will be particularly valuable for your student to hear from you about the ways that “soft skills” matter in the workplace.</p>

Exchange Week 5 - Setting Short-Term Goals
Objective
Help your student identify a short-term goal that will support the future they want. Help your student identify the benefits of achieving their short-term goal.
Follow-Up Ideas to Student’s Response from Week 4
<p><u>If your student doesn’t know what it will take to enter the career path they’ve shared:</u> Three possibilities for responding to your student in this situation are: (1) brainstorm ways your student could learn more about the requirements for success or (2) share what you know (or could find out) about the requirements for success in that field. (3) Mention any relevant clubs or activities that you’ve participated in that may be available to your student.</p> <p><u>If your student knows what it will take to enter that career:</u> Acknowledge their efforts to learn more about their chosen career. If you are familiar with the career they mentioned, briefly share what you know (or could find out) about the requirements for success in the field.</p> <p><u>Highlight the importance of education:</u> Ask your student how performance in school today might influence their ability to develop the knowledge and skills that will be necessary to achieve their goals. Convey to your student that although 9th grade seems like a long ways away from graduation and post-secondary education/work, how hard you work in 9th grade will influence what you learn, which will influence what you can do in 10th grade, 11th grade, 12th grade and beyond. It is tempting to think you can always get serious about school later, but that’s very difficult to do if you are not learning what you are supposed to learn along the way.</p> <p><u>Reinforce the importance of soft skills/networking:</u> Suggest soft skills that may be useful in their career and/or relate to their goals. Mention any resources, clubs, activities, networking events, etc. they can use to help practice these skills.</p> <p><u>If you’re not sure where to take the conversation</u> because your student was unable to articulate anything in past messages to guide your conversation, move to Track 1 to keep the dialogue flowing.</p>
Week 5 Lead Question
<i>We’ve been talking a lot about the future – let’s talk a bit about right now. Can you think of a goal you can accomplish this semester that will help you get closer to the future you want?</i>
Week 5 Talking Points

Share Your Story: Tell your student about a goal that you achieved in high school (or recently) that brought you closer to the future you want. What did you need to do to accomplish it? Were there any obstacles standing in your way, and if so, what did you do to overcome them?

Week 5 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Lead Question). This week, you might ask:

- Have you seen or heard of anyone else attempting this goal? How did their story turn out?
- What obstacles do you think might stand in the way of accomplishing your goal?

Gateway Prompts

[Gateway Track 1 Prompt](#)

[Gateway Track 3 Prompt](#)

Research and Rationale

During the second half of the program the students will be asked to think about how they can act now to achieve the future goals that they identified earlier. The process of identifying a short-term goal and the benefits of achieving that goal is part of a specific research methodology called WOOP. The letters in WOOP stand for Wish, Outcome, Obstacle and Plan.

Wish: A wish or goal in your life that is challenging but possible within a span of time

Outcome: The best thing that could come from fulfilling the wish or goal

Obstacle: Something that holds you back from fulfilling the wish or goal

Plan: A step you could take to remove or overcome the obstacle

WOOP was designed to help people achieve short-term goals that take weeks or months rather than days or years to complete. These goals can be the building blocks of success in school and in life. A variety of studies have found WOOP to be effective in enhancing student motivation and perseverance. Angela Duckworth and colleagues (2013) found that using WOOP significantly improved grades, attendance, and conduct in a group of fifth graders.

In this week's prompt, the focus will be on the Wish and the Outcome.

Week 6 Exchange – Developing Your Personal Brand
What is a Personal Brand?
<p>What comes to mind when you think of your favorite store or service? Are you impressed with their friendly customer service or ease of access? Does the atmosphere (real or virtual) make you feel comfortable, trendy, safe, known? What do other people think of this place? What is its reputation? Just as products and services communicate who <i>they</i> are through words, actions, sounds, and visuals, you communicate who <i>you</i> are through your everyday interactions with others. This is your Personal Brand.</p> <p>Need a shorter definition? A Personal Brand is everything about yourself that makes an impression on others, i.e. your appearance, behavior, attitude, and quality of work. Note: Students sometimes struggle to understand the concept of Personal Brand. However, when it clicks, the impact is powerful! You can use examples of famous people and what their brand says about them if that is helpful.</p>
Objective
<p>Encourage your student to start thinking about what their “Personal Brand” is. What skills, attributes, and/or traits do they have (or are developing) that can help them make a positive impression on others?</p>
Follow-Up Ideas to Student’s Response from Week 5
<p><u>If your student shared a goal:</u> Help your student sharpen their short-term goal(s). For example, if your student says their goal is to “get better grades,” help them identify a particular class in which they would like to do better. The more specific the goal, the better. Make sure to encourage your student to keep you updated with the progress of their goal.</p> <p><u>If your student was unable to identify a goal:</u> Think back to your conversations in past weeks to see if you might be able to suggest an area of growth. For example, if your student mentioned they like to write, you might ask if they’ve ever considered journaling their thoughts.</p> <p><u>If you’re not sure where to take the conversation</u> because your student didn’t identify a goal or was unable to articulate anything in past messages to guide your conversation, move to Track 1 to keep the dialogue flowing.</p>

Week 6 Lead Question

What do you think a Personal Brand is? What is *your* Personal Brand?

Week 6 Talking Points

Share your story: Share with your student what a Personal Brand is. Talk about how you've developed your personal brand and what goes into creating and maintaining it.

Give an example of a person you know or admire who has a particularly strong Personal Brand. What are the qualities of their brand? How did they create their Personal Brand and what challenges do you think they have in maintaining it?

Week 6 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Lead Question). This week, you might ask:

- What happens to someone's Personal Brand when they make a mistake or experience failure?
- Can you think of someone you admire who's made a serious mistake or failed at something? How did they handle it? Did it change the way you think about their Personal Brand?

Gateway Prompts

[Gateway Track 1 Prompt](#)

[Gateway Track 3 Prompt](#)

Research & Rationale

Personal Branding as a concept is credited to a 1997 article by business/organization guru Tom Peters. It is seen as a response to increased competition in the job market brought on by globalization and other tech factors. At the core of Personal Branding is the idea that workers can (1) distinguish themselves from others by offering a unique and valuable skillset and (2) market their skillset online, in person, on paper, etc. (Lair). Ultimately, the type and quality of service the worker can provide becomes their brand (Peters).

The concept of Personal Branding is not without criticism. For example, some academics believe the idea encourages employees to think of themselves only in terms of what monetary value they can bring to their employer (Lair). For our purposes, make sure students are identifying and celebrating the authentic skills and expertise they have and/or are developing, not just labeling themselves with skills they think are the most financially expedient.

Exchange Week 7 - Review Key Themes
Objective
Review the key themes covered during the course of the dialogue. Explore what they have learned from the program.
Follow-Up Ideas to Student's Response from Week 6
Acknowledge your student's response on to the previous week's theme of developing a Personal Brand. Failing to reach a goal can be disappointing and discouraging. Ask your student how they cope with mistakes and failures. Is that part of their Personal Brand? Ask your student to share their thoughts on this.
Week 7 Lead Question
<i>We've talked about your interests, goals in life, skills for success, and your personal brand. I'd like to know your thoughts about our time together. Can you think of something you learned about yourself?</i>
Week 7 Talking Points
<u>Share what you learned about your student:</u> Point out something positive that you have learned about your student. <u>Share what you learned about yourself:</u> Share something positive that you learned about yourself. This could relate to your role as a mentor or to your home or work life.
Gateway Prompts
Gateway Track 1 Prompt Gateway Track 3 Prompt

Week 8 - Validate and Affirm your student
Objective
Acknowledge and validate your student’s reflection on the program. Express your belief in your student’s ability to achieve their goals and dreams.
Follow-Up Ideas to Student’s Response from Week 7
<p><u>Validate insights your student has gained:</u> If your student identifies one or more conclusions that he or she has reached through the process, commend your student for being self-reflective and taking something from the experience.</p> <p><u>If your student did not have a thoughtful response:</u> You can mention how you hope the discussion throughout the weeks has been helpful in some way. Encourage your student to reflect on this experience in the future.</p>
Week 8 Lead Statement
<p><i>I really enjoyed getting to know you. I appreciate all you shared with me about your life and goals. I know connecting with someone through writing can seem weird at times, and I appreciate you sticking it out and connecting with me. I hope you enjoyed our discussions as much as I did and I wish you all the best for the future. Keep up the good work!</i></p>
Week 8 Talking Points
<p><u>Connect Future Goals to Current Actions:</u> Find a way to encourage your student to pursue their goals for the future. Remind them that what they do each day will play a role in whether or not they realize those goals.</p> <p><u>Be Specific in your Encouragement:</u> Refer to the information your student shared with you on their interests, goals, obstacles, challenges and plans.</p> <p><u>Reinforce the Importance of Sustained Effort:</u> Acknowledge the efforts your student has made and encourage them to continue working hard to achieve their goals in 9th grade, graduate high school, and accomplish their dreams.</p>
Gateway Prompts
<p>Gateway Track 1 Prompt Gateway Track 3 Prompt</p>

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Cloud Coach | Gateway Prompts – Track 2

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