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## Part IV

### High School Year by Year

*In this section, you will find information to guide and advise your child at each grade level. If you have a question or concern, contact your child's counselor.*

## 8th Grade

### Getting Ready for High School

*Make sure that your eighth grader is on the path to college!*

Sometimes when an eighth grade student takes an advanced course, such as Algebra I, credit is given and the grades are included in the student's GPA. As a general rule, however, the grades received in the eighth grade are not used in computing a student's GPA, nor do they appear on a student's high school transcript. The eighth grade, nevertheless, is an important year for these reasons.

- ▶ The grades earned are often used to determine ninth grade course placement. For example, a student may need an A or B in eighth grade math to be eligible to take Algebra I as a freshman.
- ▶ Students who develop good study skills in middle school are much better prepared for high school.
- ▶ Eighth grade students usually select their freshman courses in the spring. Spring is also a good time to develop a four-year high school plan. *It is very important that students start their high school career taking courses that will set them on the path for college.*
- ▶ Students involved in activities have greater academic success and enjoy school more. Also, colleges look for students who are active and involved in their school and community. With these things in mind, help your child choose some high school activities he/she might enjoy.

# 9th Grade

## Advising Your Freshman



*When a student becomes a freshman, everything starts to “count.” Freshman courses, grades, and credits all become part of a student’s transcript, and freshman grades are used in determining a student’s GPA. Freshman activities, honors, and awards can also be listed on college and scholarship applications.*

### **Monitor academic progress**

Help your child set realistic academic goals each term, and make sure that you see all progress reports and report cards. *Don’t just assume that someone will call you if there’s a problem.* Provide encouragement and support, and make sure that your child understands that freshman grades are very important.

### **Encourage involvement in activities**

Most college and scholarship applications ask students to list their high school activities. Many applications also ask for evidence of leadership. Encourage your child to be involved in meaningful activities and to take a leadership role whenever possible. Depth of involvement (being on the debate or soccer team for four years) is important because it shows focus and commitment.

Encourage your child to participate in activities outside of school (church, scouting, athletics) and to also do some volunteer work. Community service, such as volunteering for Habitat for Humanity or the Red Cross, is very worthwhile, and it’s impressive on any application.

*Colleges today are looking for quality, not quantity.* Help your child find a subject, activity, or hobby that he/she has a real interest in, and then encourage your child to develop and pursue that interest.

*Tip: During your child’s freshman year, start an “Activities Record.” Include all school and community activities, leadership positions, honors, awards, unique educational experiences, employment, and volunteer work. Update this record at least once a year. This information will be very helpful later, when your child is required to list activities and honors on college and scholarship applications.*

## **Help select appropriate 10th grade courses**

In the spring, review your child's four-year high school plan and help your child select the most appropriate courses for the following year.

## **Plan meaningful summer activities**

Encourage your child to join an athletic team, take a course, develop a hobby, read, and/or volunteer at an animal shelter, hospital, or nursing home. Many colleges also have excellent summer programs for high school students.

## **Discuss Internet use**

Remind your child not to post anything on MySpace or Facebook that he/she wouldn't want a college admissions officer to see. *Admissions officers do check these sites.*



## **Start a college savings account**

If you haven't started saving for college yet, begin now. Also look into 529 plans. For information on these educational savings and prepaid tuition plans, go to [www.savingforcollege.com](http://www.savingforcollege.com).

# **10th Grade Advising Your Sophomore**

*During their sophomore year, students need to take college prep courses and work hard to get the best grades possible. They also need to look for ways to further develop their interests, talents, and skills.*

## **Continue to monitor academic progress**

## **Encourage involvement**

Help your child find meaningful activities to be involved in, both in and out of school.

## **Encourage your child to take the PLAN, if it's offered**

The PLAN is a test that measures the same academic skills as the ACT (English, Math, Reading, and Science). Students receive an “estimated ACT score range” and an evaluation of their skills and interests.

## **Talk to your child about taking the PSAT**

This test is primarily for juniors, but many sophomores take it for practice. *For information, see page 7.*



## **Explore and discuss college options**

Gather information, go to college fairs, and make informal college visits. Encourage your child to start thinking about his/her interests and abilities in terms of possible college majors.

## **Help select appropriate 11th grade courses**

In the spring, review your child's four-year high school plan and help your child select the most appropriate courses for the following year.

## **Consider dual-credit courses**

Many high schools now have programs that enable students to take courses for both high school and college credit. These courses give students an opportunity to take a wide variety of advanced courses. For information on dual-credit courses, talk to the school counselor.

## **Discuss summer activities**

Help your son or daughter choose meaningful activities for the summer months. If possible, look for activities that relate to a career your child might want to consider.

## **Update your child's "Activities Record"**

Make sure that all sophomore activities, awards, etc. are added to your child's "Activities Record." Also encourage your child to start saving copies of anything he/she may want to include in a portfolio (artwork, newspaper clippings, game tapes, writing samples, etc.).

## **Add money to your college savings account**

# 11th Grade

## Advising Your Junior



*The junior year is when students need to seriously begin examining their college options. Juniors should take college tests, make college visits, and start searching for scholarships.*

### **Continue to monitor academic progress**

Since most college applications are completed in the fall of a student's senior year, junior year grades are usually the last grades on a student's transcript. Make sure that your child understands the importance of junior grades. Also, ask your child to find out his/her GPA and class rank.

*If your child's grades aren't what they should be, now is the time to bring them up. Colleges like seeing improvement.*

### **Encourage involvement**

Continue to encourage involvement in meaningful activities. Also encourage your child to look for opportunities to take a leadership role.

### **Have your child register for the PSAT/NMSQT in September**

All college bound juniors should take the PSAT. Students generally register for this test through their guidance office.

### **Explore college options**

Juniors need to be thinking about what they're looking for in a college. They also need to be learning as much as they can about the colleges they're considering. Talk to your child about his/her college options.

### **Make sure that your child registers for the ACT and/or SAT**

All college bound students should take the ACT and/or the SAT in the spring of their junior year.

### **Make college visits**

The junior year is a great time to make college visits. *For college visit tips, go to page 13.*



## **Help select senior year courses**

Make sure that your child's senior courses fulfill all high school graduation requirements, the requirements for the college(s) they're considering, and if necessary, the requirements for athletic eligibility. If you have any questions, contact your child's counselor.

Most college applications ask students to list their senior courses, and all colleges recommend that seniors continue to follow a strong academic program. Even though students may want to "take it easy" their senior year, they need to continue taking academic courses.

*Tip: College freshmen are often required to take a math placement test before they register for classes. In order to keep their math skills sharp, all high school seniors should take a math course.*

## **Look for scholarships**

Students who are hoping to get a scholarship should start looking for scholarship possibilities as a junior.

## **Update your child's "Activities Record"**



## **Meet with the high school counselor**

Go over your child's academic record and discuss college plans.

## **Help choose meaningful activities for the summer**

Students should try to get a job or do some volunteer work in a field related to their intended major.

## **Narrow the list of college choices**

Research and visit colleges over the summer. Students should have their list narrowed down to four or five colleges by their senior year.

## **Have your child establish an e-mail address**

Since colleges often communicate via e-mail, students need an appropriate, permanent e-mail address.

## **Continue to put money in your college savings account**

To get an idea of what kind of financial aid your child may be eligible for, go to [www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov).

# 12th Grade

## Advising Your Senior



*The senior year is when everything comes together and students see the rewards of their hard work and planning. Help your senior set priorities, clarify goals, and get applications completed on time.*

### **Continue to monitor academic progress**

Students sometimes think that senior grades aren't important. This is not true. Colleges often ask to see first semester senior grades, and high schools forward final transcripts (with senior grades) to colleges at the end of the year.

### **Help your child turn his/her "Activities Record" into a resume**

A one-page resume listing your child's educational goals, GPA, class rank, activities, academic achievements, unique experiences, etc. can be very helpful to anyone writing a recommendation. This resume can also be given to college admissions officers when making a college visit.

### **Help set up a calendar for the year**

Encourage your child to use this calendar to record test dates, college visitation days, application deadlines, etc.



### **Have your child sign up for the first ACT or SAT, if necessary**

Take a look at your child's previous test scores and determine whether or not he/she needs to take the ACT and/or SAT. Students need to register for October test dates early in September.

Colleges view test scores differently. Some colleges are looking for very high test scores; others use these test scores more for placement than admissions. If your child is interested in a competitive college or program, or is trying to get a scholarship, having high test scores can be very important. For advice on whether your child should retake the ACT and/or SAT, talk to the high school counselor or call the college admissions office.

## Oversee completion of college applications

Students should know which colleges they want to apply to by the fall of their senior year. As seniors, they can then concentrate on completing college applications, taking the ACT and/or SAT, doing well in their senior classes, and enjoying the experience of being a senior.

All colleges have admissions information and applications on their website, and high school guidance offices usually have applications for the colleges their students most often attend.

Most college applications require a high school transcript, and most have sections for the counselor to complete. *Make sure that your child follows your high school's procedures for submitting applications, requesting transcripts, and getting the required forms completed.*

High school counselors have many responsibilities and numerous applications to complete between October and February. Make sure that your child's counselor is given plenty of time to complete the required documents (e.g., forms, transcripts, recommendations).

*Tip: Have your child apply to at least one "safety school." This is a college to which your child is certain to be accepted and one you can definitely afford.*

*Tip: Keep a copy of each completed application for your files. Be sure to note the date it was submitted.*

*Tip: Colleges usually contact students to let them know they've received their application. If you don't hear from a college, contact the admissions office to make sure they have everything they need.*

## Complete financial aid and scholarship forms

If you're applying for financial aid, complete the FAFSA and submit it as soon after January 1 as possible. *See page 25 for information on financial aid.*



## Make the decision

At some point in the spring, your child must decide which college to attend. *Do not choose a college before making a college visit.* Once the decision is made, complete the necessary forms, and as a courtesy, notify the other colleges. If your child is planning to live on campus, be sure to send in the required housing deposit before the deadline.