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## Part IV

# High School Year by Year

*Here 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. While a school counselor can be an invaluable resource, you and your child must assume responsibility for making sure that all college requirements are met.*

## 8th Grade

### Getting Ready for High School



Sometimes when an eighth grade student takes an advanced course, such as Algebra I, credit is given and the grades are included in a 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 the following reasons:

- ▶ The grades earned are often used to determine ninth grade course placement. For example, a student may need an A or a 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. Since all freshman courses and grades become part of the high school record, freshman courses must be chosen carefully. Spring is also a good time to develop a four-year high school plan.
- ▶ Students involved in activities have greater academic success and enjoy school more. Also, colleges want students who are active and involved. With these things in mind, help your child identify some high school activities that 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, whenever possible, take a leadership role. 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 also participate in activities outside of school (church, scouting, athletics) and to do some volunteer work. Community service (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 select the most appropriate courses for the following year.

## Plan meaningful summer activities

Many of the traditional summer activities can be very worthwhile. Your child could join an athletic team, take a course, develop a hobby, read, 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 a site like 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

*Sophomores need to start identifying their abilities, aptitudes, and interests. They should also be looking for ways to further develop their 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 sign up for the PLAN if it's offered**

The PLAN 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/NMSQT**

The PSAT/NMSQT is a national test that's administered by high schools in October. Although the PSAT/NMSQT is primarily for juniors, many sophomores take it for practice. *For additional information, see page 9.*

## **Consider dual-credit courses**

Many high schools now have programs that enable students to take courses for both high school and college credit. For information on dual-credit courses, talk to the school counselor.



## **Explore and discuss college options**

Gather information, go to college fairs, and make informal visits to colleges. 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 select the most appropriate courses for the following year.

## **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 be interested in pursuing.

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

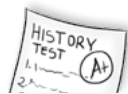
At the end of the year, all sophomore activities, awards, etc. should be added to your child's "Activities Record."

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

# 11th Grade

## Advising Your Junior

*The junior year is when students should begin seriously 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, the junior year grades are usually the last grades on a student's transcript. Make sure that your child understands the importance of his/her junior grades. Also, ask your child to find out his/her GPA and class rank.

### Encourage involvement

Continue to encourage involvement in meaningful activities.

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

All college bound juniors should take the PSAT. Students should see their counselor to register for this test.

### Explore college options

Talk to you son or daughter about college options. Juniors need to be thinking about what they're looking for in a college, and they need to be learning as much as they can about the colleges they are considering.

### Make sure your child registers for the ACT and/or the SAT early in the spring

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

### Make college visits

The junior year is a great time to make college visits. *For tips on what to do on a college visit, 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.

All colleges recommend that seniors continue to follow a strong college prep program, and most applications ask students to list their senior courses. 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. 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"**

**In the spring, meet with your child and the high school counselor to go over your child's 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**

Continue to research and visit colleges over the summer. Students should have their list narrowed down to 3 - 5 colleges by the fall of their senior year.



**Have your child establish an appropriate, permanent e-mail address to use when communicating with colleges**

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

# 12th Grade

## Advising Your Senior

*The senior year is when everything comes together, and students see the rewards of their hard work and planning.*

### Continue to monitor academic progress

Students sometimes think that senior grades aren't important. This is not true. Colleges 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 set up a calendar for the year

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



### Have your son or daughter 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 the SAT. Students need to register for the October ACT or SAT early in September.

Colleges view ACT and SAT 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 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.

If students do not do well on the ACT and/or SAT, this doesn't mean that they won't be accepted into the college of their choice, or that they won't do well in college. Admissions officers look at a variety of criteria when evaluating applicants, and many students who don't do well on the ACT or SAT do fine in college.

## 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, retaking the ACT or SAT, if necessary, and doing well in their senior classes.

Colleges have admissions information and applications on their websites, and high school guidance/counseling offices generally have applications for the colleges their students most often attend.

*Tip: Make sure that your child applies to at least one “safety school.” This is a college to which your child is certain to be accepted and one that you can definitely afford.*

All college applications require a high school transcript, and most have sections for the counselor to complete. 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 prepare transcripts and complete application(s).

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

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

## Complete financial aid and scholarship forms

If you are 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.