

Academic Timeline for College Planning

Starting in Middle School is crucial to building a foundation that will successfully help students make the transition from middle school to high school and finally to college. Study habits and learning to overcome challenges are key areas for middle school students to learn.

Promote good attendance in elementary and middle school and naturally they will want to attend high school. Elementary sets the foundation of all future education. It is never too late to turn the corner and start to motivate your child to attend school.

Middle School:

- Set goals for each school year. Make school your partner.
- Review the school calendar together and note important dates or deadlines. (Helps students to understand deadlines)
- Make a plan to check in regularly about school work. Create a study time away from the computer and television. Put away the electronics including cell phones. This will help develop strong study habits.
- Talk about extracurricular activities. Getting involved is a great way to identify interests and get them involved in the school atmosphere.
- Discuss ways to take on challenges. Encourage your child to take the most challenging courses that he or she can take and handle. This builds a strong foundation in prior knowledge and teaches them rigor and confidence.
- Research shows that students who take algebra and geometry early (by the end of 8th and 9th grade respectively) are much more likely to go on to college than students who do not. This basis in math allows the student to take on higher level sciences in high school like chemistry and physics.
- Taking a foreign language over multiple years in middle and high school allows students to understand another language, build skills, and map an understanding of whole language. It also prepares them for the global economy. If taken in middle school, it could count for high school credit.
- Take computer science classes to build a basis of basic computer skills and understand the different programs that are used in developing presentations and research reports.
- Get ahead and take a virtual class. You can take ones that count for middle school (M/J is front of the course name and number) or you can take courses that would count for high school credit like HOPE, Outdoor Education, or Social Media. Taking anything for high school credit results in establishing a high school grade point average (GPA) and so students should try and earn nothing lower than a B average.
- ***Come up with fun reading ideas that you can discuss together. Start at an early age and they naturally pick up a book or magazine to read. Have them read opposing sides and have a discussion. Ask them to show you the evidence in the reading to support their reasoning.***
- Visit nearby colleges together to get your child interested in college.
- Parents should start looking into the big picture for paying for college. There are so many avenues that can lead to free money like grants and scholarships. Visit bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college for more information.
- If offered take the Duke Talent Search for the Act and/or SAT. It gives them practice into these 2 highly competitive tests for college entrance.

9th Grade:

- Choose the most challenging high school courses you can be the most successful in
- Become familiar with college entrance requirements
- Understand Bright Futures Requirements
- Understand NCAA Clearinghouse Requirements if you are an athlete
- Join Extracurricular Activities that you see a future in continuing throughout high school
- Join an Athletic Team if you are interested
- Research College Costs both in state and out of state
- Start documenting all community service hours and turn them into the school's Registrar
- Take PSAT for the experience of understanding what the SAT test looks for
- Remember that every grade counts now...start strong...grades do count for college entrance
- Try to do something productive in the summer: a job, a camp counselor, Upward Bound, community service

10th Grade:

- Continue to plan and take the most challenging high school courses you can be the most successful in
- Start to take a foreign language (Must have 2 consecutive years of the same language)
- Take AP tests that are applicable
- Become familiar with college entrance requirements
- Understand Bright Futures Requirements
- Understand NCAA Clearinghouse Requirements if you are an athlete
- Take the PLAN test late October or early November (Practice ACT test given to all 10th graders)
- Take the PSAT test in mid-October (Practice SAT given to any 9th, 10th, or 11th grader that registers for it)
- Begin to think of where you might want to attend to college: region, size, and cost are all factors
- Join Extracurricular activities and sports
- Continue documenting community service hours and turn them in on a regular basis
- Start to have the conversations with parents about costs of higher education
- Try to do something productive in the summer: a job, a camp counselor, community service
- Spend time in the summer reviewing the SAT on www.collegeboard.org and the ACT on www.act.org to become familiar with the tests and what you need to know to do your best--Plan to take these tests in your Junior Year

11th Grade:

- Continue to plan and take the most challenging high school courses you can take and be the most successful in
- Take AP and/or IB tests that are applicable
- Become familiar with the college entrance requirements
- Understand the Bright Futures Requirements--including test scores needed
- If you are an athlete, start the registration process with NCAA Clearinghouse
- If you are interested in one of the branches of the military, start to talk to recruiters --Take the ASVAB Test
- Continue to document your community service hours and turn them into the school
- Throughout the year start to list your choices of schools and map out all requirements such as test scores needed, GPA needed, classes, and such

- Know how many credits your school of choice will allow you to enter with from AP, IB, and Dual Enrollment courses
- Start to make comparisons of schools with location, cost, size, and academic appeal
- Create a filing system to keep all important information together on each school you are interested in
- Take the PSAT in mid-October. Junior year allows you to qualify for National Merit Status
- Register and take either or both the SAT and ACT (You should plan to take the test at least twice--usually once at the end of the Junior year and once at the beginning of the Senior year)
- Attend the local college fairs in the Spring
- Start creating an academic resume
- Make an appointment with your school counselor to make sure you are on track before you leave for the summer
- Get familiar with www.FLVC.org to monitor your community service, transcripts, and Bright Futures status
- Junior year is the most important year to make sure you earn the best grades and continue making your GPA strong. Colleges will be looking at your GPA that you have established over these last 3 years as you apply during your senior year
- Use your summer to start visiting colleges you might be interested in attending
- Use your summer to do something productive: a job, a camp counselor, community service
- Attend the college boot camp in the summer

12th Grade:

Fall--

- Continue to take the most challenging high school courses--now is not the time to take easy classes
- Take AP and/or IB tests that are applicable
- Understand Bright Futures Requirements
- Register and take the ACT or SAT in the Fall
- Make an appointment with your School Counselor to review your transcripts to make sure everything is in order
- Continue to monitor www.FLVC.org
- Take any SAT Subject tests that are needed but a college you might be interested in
- Attend college visits at school
- Establish a calendar with important deadline dates for applications--It is very important that you do not miss a deadline.
- Visit any other colleges on your list
- Stay involved in extracurricular activities and sports
- Attend college visits on our campus--ask those important questions
- Consider whom you would like to write any needed recommendations--choose someone who knows you and can add that personal touch. Do not send recommendations letter to schools that do not ask for them
- Complete your academic resume
- Continue to turn in all your community service hours (100 hours is needed for Bright Futures)
- Investigate scholarship opportunities--apply for small ones and big ones
- Complete all college applications and essays--these should all be complete by January
- Make sure you have all test scores sent by the companies to the schools you are applying to
- Follow up with schools to make sure they have received all important documents

Spring--

- In January, start the financial aid process (FAFSA, Bright Futures, and Florida Financial Aid)
- Parents should file early in February their taxes---this will be needed to file financial aid
- Most colleges make financial aid packages by mid-March
- Watch for your SAR (Student Aid Report) after you have filed to make sure there is nothing that needs to be corrected
- Let the school of choice know your intentions. Watch for more deadlines regarding orientations, dorm room and meal plan deadlines, and choosing courses for your summer or fall term

Following Year:

- Every January, you will have to renew your financial aid (It is not done automatically)