



Countdown to College Checklist

- Develop and maintain good study habits - every grade, every year counts!
- Learn how to plan effectively and manage your time well.
- Remain involved in activities you enjoy.
- Ask questions when needed, of parents, teachers and your school counselor.

Grade 9:

- Get involved in extracurricular activities you enjoy and add value to applications. Extracurricular activities also help decide what you like and dislike are.
- Find out what high school courses may help you gain acceptance to certain colleges or career fields. Explore areas of interest through elective options.
- Discuss your high school courses, your likes and dislikes, and what you may like to study in the future with your school counselor.
- Look into summer jobs and the age/skills necessary for them.
- Get involved in volunteer activities that will expand your experience and skills.
- Keep a resume/record of your extracurricular activities and work experiences.
- Challenge yourself to take the most rigorous coursework in high school that you will do well in.
- Consider serving in leadership positions when possible, in your extracurricular activities.
- Freshman grades count! They will be calculated as 1/3 of the GPA used for college admissions.
- Research eligibility criteria in your school for Honor Society admission. (i.e. National, Foreign Language, Math, Art, etc.)

Grade 10:

- Discuss high school course selections with your school counselor and parents to ensure they meet your college/career interests.
- Continue to talk with your parents about your college plans.
- Evaluate your past summer experiences and determine your plan for the upcoming summer.
- Discuss whether you are an appropriate candidate to take the PSAT in October with your school counselor and parents.
- Complete a career assessment/inventory to determine where your interests lie.
- Consider taking the SAT Subject Tests in May or June in an area that you are strong in, particularly if you are in an AP course.
- Consider Scholars Programs offered at local colleges/universities.
- For student athletes, look into NCAA core course requirements to make sure you are meeting eligibility standards.
- Visit local colleges/universities and attend local college fairs. www.nacac.com
- Continue to build your resume by remaining active in community service, summer employment and extracurricular activities.
- Continue to explore scholarship opportunities.
- Your grades count - continue to study!!!

Grade 11:

- Ensure your coursework meets high school graduation, specific diploma type and college admissions requirements.
- In preparation for the SAT, take the PSAT. This also establishes your eligibility for the National Merit Scholarship competition, the National Achievement Scholarship Program for Outstanding Negro Students, and/or the National Hispanic Scholar Awards Program.
- Discuss your PSAT scores with your school counselor and parents.
- Use your PSAT results to focus on areas of weakness and consider taking an SAT prep course. i.e. private tutoring, group instruction, practice manuals and on-line instruction.
- Utilize the free SAT preparation resources available on the College Board website, such as My College Quickstart, which contains a personalized study plan based on your PSAT scores. The access code for this service can be found on your PSAT score report.
- Continue to talk with your parents about your future plans.
- Decide what criteria you are looking for in a college or university. Consider factors such as location, cost, major, size of campus and setting of campus as well as the environment of the college. Develop a list of possible schools you are interested in attending. Your Guidance Office or school library may have books and websites to help you.
- Register on Naviance and become familiar with the resources. Use the college search program to narrow down your options.
- Attend college and/or career fairs in your school, community or region.
- Attend sessions with college representatives that visit your high school.
- Research college majors or vocational areas that correspond with your abilities and interests.
- Begin researching sources of financial aid and scholarships you may be eligible for. Be sure to discuss how you and your family will finance your college education.
- If you are interested in a Military Academy or ROTC scholarship, begin the application process early in junior year.
- Take the SAT and the ACT. Consider taking both two times in junior year to maximize your options. Take the SAT & ACT with Writing at least once (it is optional). Consider taking the SAT Subject Tests if you will be applying to the more competitive colleges/universities.
- If the schools you are considering require the SAT Subject Tests take them in May or June, while the course material is still fresh in your mind. Speak with your math teacher to determine which level of math is appropriate for you.
- Visit the schools that are high on your list when the school is in session so you can talk to students and professors as well as Admission counselors. Make an appointment to speak to a Financial Aid officer.
- Develop a comprehensive resume; include all volunteer, work and activity experiences.
- Consider which teachers you would like to ask to write a letter of recommendation. Major subject area teachers are preferable.
- If portfolios, audition CD's, writing samples, or other evidence of talent are required for admission or for scholarships, begin to compile these items.
- Apply for a summer job or internship.
- Save some graded papers/essays that you are proud of. Some colleges/universities will request this information as part of your Admission packet or for Honor Program applications.
- While researching colleges, consider the retention rate (the percent of freshman that return to the college the following year), the commuter rate and the graduation rate. (www.collegenavigator.ed.gov.)
- Plan to take a strong senior year program.
- Start to brainstorm essay topics and work on some drafts.

Grade 11: Summer

- Check on-line for the availability of the applications. Check www.commonapp.org to see if the schools you are interested in subscribe to the Common Application. Start to complete applications. Check if supplemental applications/essays are required.
- Revise and refine your college essay(s).

- If seeking an athletic scholarship, make contact with the coaches at schools of your interest; include a resume listing athletic profile & accomplishments. Consider attending a sport camp at a college/university - check with your coach and athletic office.
- Research the timeline and process for private scholarship sources you have identified.
- Research scholarship criteria and procedures for colleges of interest.
- Visit the schools that interest you the most, if you have not done so already.
- Consider preparing over the summer to retake the SAT/ACT in early fall of senior year if necessary. Register early as testing sites fill quickly.
- Compile an activity resume that will be submitted with your application.

Grade 12: Fall

- Narrow down your college list to 10 – 12 schools – make sure the majority are safety and match schools; include additional dream schools, if you choose.
- If you are applying to very competitive/popular schools or if you are looking for merit aid, you may need several additional schools on this list.
- Make sure you have “financial safeties” on this list.
- Plan to retake the SAT/ACT exams if needed and continue to prepare for these exams.
- FairTest (www.fairtest.org) contains a list of SAT/ACT optional schools although restrictions may apply so always check with the specific college on their policy.
- Plan to apply early in senior year – preferably by November, for the majority of schools, unless you have standardized testing to complete or would like senior year grades to be considered as part of your application. Watch deadlines for early action & early decision. Research the specific policies of early action programs – some contain restrictions.
- Meet with your school counselor & teachers to discuss your letter of recommendation and provide any forms/documentation they may require.
- Continue to research scholarship opportunities.
- Notify your Guidance Office if you are applying to the NCAA Clearinghouse.
- Continue to visit colleges. Upon acceptance, you may schedule an overnight visit at a college to learn if it is a good match for your needs.
- Plan to meet with college representatives that visit your high school.
- Keep in mind that submitting financial aid forms may be required for scholarship consideration at specific colleges.
- Complete all financial aid forms:
 October – CSS Profile – required by select private colleges found at www.collegeboard.com
 October – FAFSA – required by all colleges www.fafsa.ed.gov
 Complete financial aid forms specific to colleges, if required.