

A Planning List for Parents of Ninth- and 10th-Graders

It may seem early to start thinking about getting your child ready for college, but it really isn't — important groundwork should take place in ninth and 10th grades. Here's a list to help you make sure your child is on the right path.

GRADE 9

- 1. Create a four-year high school plan.** Once your child is settled into ninth grade, introduce the idea of preparing an overall plan for high school that relates to their goals.
 - Make sure you and your child know what high school courses are required by colleges, and that their ninth-grade courses are on the right track.
 - Map out when these courses should be taken.
 - Familiarize yourself with the various levels of courses offered by your child's school.
- 2. Tell your child to start thinking about careers.** Encourage your child to develop a tentative career goal. Of course it will change — often — but it's the thought process that counts.
 - Help your child to identify interests — likes and dislikes — not just in academics but in all areas. This will help your child focus on goals.
 - Encourage your child to discuss career options with others, such as the school counselor, teachers, recent college graduates who are working, professionals in the community, etc.
- 3. Suggest extracurricular activities.** Encourage your child to actively take part in a sport, school club, music or drama group, or community volunteer activity.
 - If your child may want to play sports in college, research the National College Athletic Association eligibility requirements. The NCAA requires completion of certain core courses; you can find the specifics at eligibilitycenter.org.
- 4. Meet with the school counselor.** The school counselor knows how to help your child get the most out of high school. Make sure your child has an opportunity during the school year to discuss post-high-school plans with the school counselor and map out courses to take during the rest of high school.
 - You should participate in this meeting, too.
- 5. Ask if the PSAT™ 8/9 is offered to ninth-graders.** The PSAT 8/9 will help you and your child's teachers figure out what your child needs to work on the most so that they're ready for college when they graduate from high school. It tests the same skills and knowledge as the SAT®, PSAT/NMSQT®, and PSAT™ 10 — in a way that makes sense for their grade level.
- 6. Save for college.** It's still not too late to start a college savings plan, if you haven't already. Every little bit helps!
 - Investigate state financial aid programs and 529 plans.
- 7. Obtain a Social Security number for your child if you don't already have one.** This is often required for applications, testing, scholarships, and other opportunities.

GRADE 10

- 1. Meet with the school counselor — again.** Make sure your child meets with their school counselor to ensure that she or he is enrolled in college-preparatory courses.
 - Check to see that your child is taking any prerequisites to advanced-level junior- and senior-year courses.
- 2. Ask if the PSAT 10 or PSAT/NMSQT is offered to 10th-graders.** While the PSAT/NMSQT is usually taken in the 11th grade, it is also often offered in the 10th. That's because it provides invaluable feedback on the student score report; 10th-graders can then work on any disclosed academic weaknesses while there is still ample time to improve them.
- 3. Is your child interested in attending a U.S. military academy?** If so, they should request a precandidate questionnaire and complete it. Your school counselor can help with this.
- 4. Attend college and career fairs.** These often take place in the fall at your school or in your area.
- 5. Support your child's participation in a school activity or volunteer effort.** Extracurricular activities help students develop time-management skills and enrich the school experience.
- 6. Tour college campuses.** If possible, take advantage of vacation or other family travel opportunities to visit colleges and see what they're like.
 - Even if there is no interest in attending the college you are visiting, it will help your child learn what to look for in a college.

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