

**EDUCATIONAL PLANNING OF LIFE:
FINDING THE RIGHT KEY TO UNLOCKING YOUR FUTURE**

COLLEGE TIMELINE GRADES 8 – 10

GRADE 8

- _____ Consult 8th grade counselor and teachers for appropriate course selections.
- _____ Choose the most appropriate graduation plan for your proposed post-high school endeavors.
- _____ Attend student/parent evening programs for high school/college planning.
- _____ Complete your 8th grade Naviance Family Connection milestones and four year graduation plan.
- _____ Students with disabilities please bring your career interests from Naviance and four year graduation plan to your ARD meeting to provide information on your transition plan.

GRADE 9 – FRESHMAN YEAR

- _____ Plan your high school program of studies with your parents.
- _____ Request college catalogs from colleges of interest to you and plan your high school program of studies accordingly. For example, many colleges and universities require two or more years of a Language Other Than English.
- _____ Begin researching your career choices and the educational requirements of each.
- _____ Attend military academy presentation in your regional area.
- _____ Develop good study habits.
- _____ Participate in a variety of extracurricular activities.
- _____ Complete your 9th grade Naviance Family Connection milestones and four year plan.
- _____ Students with disabilities please bring your career interests from Naviance Family Connection and four year graduation plan to your ARD meeting to provide information on your transition plan.
- _____ Check out books, videos, software from career center.
- _____ Choose your 10th grade year courses wisely!
- _____ **Plan to attend the CCISD College Fair** during the fall semester.
- _____ Meet with college representatives as they visit your school.
- _____ Begin building your **résumé** in Naviance Family Connection.

GRADE 10 – SOPHOMORE YEAR

AUGUST

- _____ Check credits to make sure you are on schedule for graduation requirements.
- _____ Check to make sure your courses meet college entrance requirements.

SEPTEMBER

- _____ Review for the PSAT/NMSQT or ACT Plan/Aspire using Method Test Prep in Naviance Family Connection. Study the PSAT/NMSQT Student Bulletin and old tests. Use computer software and printed aids for study and review additional materials at www.collegeboard.org.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

- _____ Take the PSAT/NMSQT or ACT Plan/Aspire for practice. On the test form, check the box which will put you on the mailing list for college information.
- _____ Complete your 10th grade Naviance Family Connection milestones and four year plan.
- _____ Students with disabilities please bring your career interests from Naviance Family Connection and four year graduation plan to your ARD meeting to provide information on your transition plan
- _____ **Plan to attend the CCISD College Fair** during the fall semester.

DECEMBER/JANUARY

- _____ Plan a program of study for your junior year with your counselor. Learn about opportunities to earn college credit or advanced placement (College Board Advanced Placement Testing). Take as many academic courses as possible.
- _____ Study your PSAT/NMSQT or ACT Plan/Aspire score report. Compare items missed with the correct responses.
- _____ Attend District Financial Aid Night with your parents.
- _____ Attend programs about Dual Credit options at your high school campus.

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

- _____ Continue taking appropriate courses.
- _____ Maintain good grades.
- _____ Gather and review information about colleges.
- _____ Investigate costs of various college programs.
- _____ Continue to review career choices. Check out materials.
- _____ Choose 11th grade year courses wisely!
- _____ Explore opportunities for college dual-enrollment credit.
- _____ Meet with college representatives as they visit your school. Check dates and sign up through Naviance Family Connection.
- _____ Participate in community activities and keep log documenting hours served.
- _____ Seek ways to develop your leadership skills.
- _____ Continue building your **résumé** in Naviance Family Connection.

*Students with disabilities—please contact your counselor at least 8 weeks prior to registration for any college entrance exam to discuss any accommodations for testing based on ARD committee recommendations.

COLLEGE TIMELINE FOR JUNIORS

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

- _____ **Review** your credits/graduation plan and make sure you are on track for graduation.
- _____ **Review** high school coursework and activity plans. Consider graduating on the highest graduation program – the Distinguished Achievement Program. See your counselor for details.
- _____ *Remember, colleges are looking for the following:*
 - Challenging coursework
 - Strong GPA
 - Involvement in extracurricular activities
 - Community Service
- _____ If you do not already have one, obtain a **Social Security** number. It is necessary to apply for financial aid.
- _____ Consider taking an **SAT** course to prepare for upcoming SATs.
- _____ **Plan to attend the CCISD College Fair and Clear to College** during the fall semester.
- _____ Put together a **list** of 10 **colleges** you are interested in. Plan to apply to at least 3-5 schools.
- _____ Talk to your parents and high school counselor about where you want to go to school.
- _____ Study and register for the **PSAT** (Preliminary SAT) using Method Test Prep in Naviance Family Connection. See your counselor for details. Check out additional practice materials at www.collegeboard.org.

October

- _____ Take the **PSAT/NMSQT**. (Remember to *take your calculator*.)

November

- _____ Complete your 11th grade Naviance Family Connection milestones and four year plan.
- _____ Continue building your **résumé** in Naviance Family Connection.
- _____ Students with disabilities please bring your career interests from Naviance Family Connection and four year graduation plan to your ARD meeting to provide information on your transition plan
- _____ Look into eligibility requirements for federal and private student loans.
- _____ **Attend** Financial Aid night. Check with your counselor for date and time.

January

- _____ PSAT* score report should be in. Use the guide to interpret and understand your score.
- _____ Plan to take the SAT*, SAT Subject Tests*, or ACT* exams if necessary. **Check with the colleges you're applying to for specific testing requirements. Register online at www.act.org or www.collegeboard.org. Pay attention to deadlines. Review using Method Test Prep in Naviance Family Connection.**
- _____ If you plan to apply for a JROTC scholarship or admission to a service academy, write for application packets.
- _____ Visit the web sites of the colleges that interest you most. Plan to visit the campus of those colleges that interest you. Look for summer enrichment programs specifically geared for rising seniors.

February

_____ **Register** and study for the **SAT* and/or ACT*** exams.

March/April

_____ Plan a college visit during Spring Break.

_____ Begin investigating outside funding resources of **financial aid**.

_____ Check credits to make sure you are on schedule for graduation requirements.

_____ Plan a program of study for your senior year with your counselor. Learn about opportunities to earn college credit or advanced placement (College Board Advanced Placement Testing). Take as many academic courses as possible.

_____ Register for AP tests.

_____ Register for college entrance tests (SAT*, ACT*, SAT Subject Tests*).

_____ Begin working on your “**Résumé**,” listing awards, extracurricular activities, work experience, and other pertinent information.

May

_____ Take the **SAT* and/or ACT*** exam. It is critical to take a college admissions test before your senior year. We recommend you take both the SAT* and ACT* tests to determine which style of test is best for you.

_____ Take SAT Subject* test if needed.

_____ Take any **AP exams** you have registered for.

_____ Consider **scheduling college visits** for summer months if possible.

June

_____ Obtain a summer **job** that might be related to your career interests.

_____ Look for **volunteer** opportunities.

_____ **Save** money, if possible, to help pay for college costs.

_____ Schedule college visits if you can coordinate it with travel plans.

_____ Keep a record of the advantages and disadvantages of each college.

_____ Request catalogs, applications, financial aid information, and specific information about your proposed major area of study. Check catalogs for SAT Subject Tests or ACT requirements.

_____ Create a list of persons who you will ask to write a letter of recommendation for you.

_____ Check out the web.

*Students with disabilities—please contact your counselor at least 8 weeks prior to registration for any college entrance exam to discuss any accommodations for testing based on ARD committee recommendations.

COLLEGE TIMELINE FOR SENIORS

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

- _____ **Plan to attend the CCISD College Fair and Clear to College** during the fall semester.
- _____ Meet with your guidance counselor to review your records and complete your senior contract. Submit required recommendation “brag sheet” to your counselor.
- _____ Register with **NCAA Clearinghouse** if you are planning to play college sports.
- _____ Register for **ACT* or SAT* or SAT Subject*** tests if necessary. (If you miss the first fall test date, your next opportunity may be too late to send scores to your college choices). Review using Method Test Prep in Naviance Family Connection.
- _____ Complete **senior forms** in Naviance (**Student Brag Sheet; Parent Brag Sheet; Résumé**) to be used for recommendations. If you will need recommendations written for your applications, contact those teachers, counselors, or other individuals this month.
- _____ Narrow **college choices** to a few schools. Your selection should include at least one that you feel will definitely accept you.
- _____ If you are applying to any Texas Public University and most Two-Year colleges, complete the “**Apply Texas**” application at www.applytexas.org. A universal “**Common Application**” is also available for private colleges at www.commonapp.org.
- _____ Send for or download application materials/financial aid information if you have not already done so.
- _____ Apply for any and all **scholarships** for which you qualify. Check Naviance Family Connection weekly for additional scholarship opportunities.
- _____ If your college or scholarship applications require **essays**, **GET STARTED**. Choose an English teacher to help you critique your work.
- _____ Talk with teachers and other individuals who know you well regarding recommendations.
- _____ Check college catalogs and websites for deadline dates for application for admissions, housing, financial aid, required entrance exam (SAT* or ACT*) and acceptable financial aid form (FAFSA or Profile).
- _____ Begin processing college application forms.
- _____ If you are a candidate for early decision, file your application in time to meet that deadline. Also be sure to check the LAST acceptable test date for an early decision candidate.
- _____ Continue preparation for SAT* or ACT* tests.
- _____ Schedule college tours. Check your school calendar for dates when you are not in school other than holidays. Use these. Call or write ahead for an appointment. Observe CCISD attendance policy.
- _____ Meet with college representatives when they visit your high school.
- _____ Maintain good grades.

OCTOBER

- _____ Continue processing application and recommendation forms to guidance counselors and teachers for completion of their sections. (Teachers and counselors are asked to write numerous recommendations – **always allow at least three weeks** for them to complete recommendations.) Follow your campus **counseling office procedure**.
- _____ Arrange for transcripts and recommendations to be sent to colleges through Naviance Family Connection.

- _____ Continue to fill out application forms. On-line applications are preferable for most colleges. Be sure to follow the directions. Many colleges require essay responses. Allow yourself ample time to do a good job. Use spelling and grammar software to check your essay.
- _____ Meet application deadlines for early decision or early action (usually November 1), housing, scholarships, or financial aid as stated by each college. CAUTION: these deadlines may vary by college or university.
- _____ Take/retake the SAT* or ACT*, if necessary.
- _____ Find out the SAT Subject Tests* requirements of your college choices. If required, register to take SAT* subject tests on a date when you will NOT be taking the SAT*. **You are not permitted to take the SAT* and SAT Subject Tests* on the same date.**
- _____ Continue to submit college application forms, even if you have submitted an early decision or early action application.

NOVEMBER

- _____ Continue to study hard because your first semester senior year grades are very important. Most colleges request a copy of your 1st semester senior grades for admission consideration.
- _____ Continue to complete college applications for admissions. Follow up on letters of recommendation. Request transcripts as needed. Copy ALL forms before you mail them. Mail to meet deadlines as stated by colleges and universities.
- _____ Take/retake ACT*, SAT* or SAT Subject Tests* if necessary.
- _____ All recommendations that have deadlines through January 15 must be submitted to the counselor by December 1.
- _____ Attend District Financial Aid Night with your parents.

DECEMBER

- _____ Look back over your timeline to be sure you have completed each step in the college admissions process.
- _____ Most application(s) should be submitted before January first.
- _____ Request that SAT* or ACT* scores be sent to all colleges to which you have applied. If you did not list them when you registered for the tests, fill out the special form for additional college scores. These forms are available in the counseling office. These scores may be ordered by telephone or on the ACT* or College Board websites.
- _____ Expect notification of Early Decision acceptance or deferral by December 15.
- _____ Take the SAT Subject Tests* that are required by the colleges of your choice. (You signed up for these in October.)
- _____ Ask your parents to begin gathering their financial information.
- _____ The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or College Scholarship Service Profile must be filed January 1st or later (www.fafsa.gov).

JANUARY

- _____ Complete financial aid forms as needed (Profile/ FAFSA). Submit as soon after January 1 as possible. Submit any supplemental financial forms required by the colleges of your choice.
- _____ Research scholarships and loans.
- _____ If required, complete and return any mid-year reports to colleges which request them. Request a mid-year transcript through Naviance Family Connection.

FEBRUARY

- _____ Keep your grades up . . . finish strong . . . remember that you will be accepted to college “**Pending the successful completion of your 12th grade course work.**”
- _____ Check deadline dates for financial aid/scholarship grants. Many forms are due March 1.

MARCH

- _____ Register for AP tests as appropriate.
- _____ Honor Grad deadline for outside coursework is the end of the 3rd nine weeks.

APRIL

- _____ Look for acceptance notices. April 1st is the most popular date for colleges to notify students.
- _____ Carefully choose your college and write the college a letter of acceptance, which the college should receive before May 1.
- _____ Write other colleges to decline their acceptance (also before May 1).
- _____ If you are wait-listed and wish to be kept in consideration, be sure to advise the college in writing.
- _____ If all colleges send rejections, don't panic! There are several alternatives. See your counselor immediately to explore other possibilities.
- _____ Finalize plans for housing, financial aid, and/or scholarships.
- _____ Make any deposit required by the institution you plan to attend. May 1st is the generally accepted nationwide deadline for deposits for fall term. Be sure to check with your college for their exact requirements.

MAY

- _____ Make final choice of college or university, if you have not already done so. Complete all details concerning college admissions.
- _____ Notify your counselor of your final college choice and whether you have been awarded any scholarships (academic, athletic, artistic, dramatic, or musical— **NOT LOANS.**)
- _____ Complete Graduation Survey in Naviance, including requesting your final transcript.
- _____ Complete SENIOR EXIT FORM indicating colleges applied to, scholarships and grants awarded, and where you want your final transcript to be sent.
- _____ Take AP test(s) as previously decided.

JUNE

- _____ Attend graduation ceremonies and celebrate. **HAVE A HAPPY GRADUATION!**
- _____ When you receive your Advanced Placement Test grades, if you have not already requested that the scores be sent to the college that you will be attending, request the College Entrance Examination Board to do so.
- _____ Participate in the orientation program of the college you will attend. This may have occurred in the spring, during the summer or just prior to the fall term.
- _____ Consider taking College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams when you get to college.

*Students with disabilities—please contact your counselor at least 8 weeks prior to registration for any college entrance exam to discuss any accommodations for testing based on ARD committee recommendations.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT SENIORITIS – MAKE YOUR SENIOR YEAR COUNT

Seniors have worked hard for three years, taking tests, completing projects, and preparing for college admission. When the senior year rolls around, some students just want to get through college applications and relax before they head off to the college of their choice. Also known as senioritis, taking it easy during the senior year may seem like a nice break, but is likely to do more harm than good.

According to recent reports, incomplete high school preparation can contribute to academic problems in college.

- *As many as half of all college students do not have adequate academic preparation, and are required to take remedial courses.*
- *More than one quarter of the freshmen at 4-year colleges and nearly half of those at 2-year colleges do not even make it to their sophomore year.*

Not only does senioritis jeopardize your chances for success later on in college, it can also affect your grades – and college admission officers pay close attention to your performance senior year. **Highly competitive colleges may rescind admission/scholarship offers as a result of poor performance during the senior year.**

Senior-Year Grades and College Admission. Many students mistakenly believe that prepping for college ends after the eleventh grade. However, the senior year – the entire senior year – is actually of particular interest to colleges.

Applying. Many college applications (including the Common Application) require you to list your senior courses, including information about course levels and credit hours. It will be very obvious to the admission officers if you've decided to "take the year off." Many colleges also include as part of the application a form called the mid-year grade report. Your counselor completes this form with first-half grades and sends it to the colleges to which you've applied. It then becomes a crucial part of the application folder.

If You Are Accepted. Many college acceptance letters include warnings to students such as "Your admission is contingent on your continued successful performance." This means colleges reserve the right to deny you admission should your senior year grades drop. Mary Lee Hoganson, College Counselor for Homewood-Flossmor Community High School, Flossmor, Illinois writes: "It is not at all rare for a college to withdraw an offer of admission when grades drop significantly over the course of the senior year. (I have a folder full of copies of these letters.)"

How to Make the Most of Your Senior Year. Senior year is your opportunity to strengthen your skills and broaden your experiences, in school and out, to prepare for all of the challenges ahead. A successful senior year can help launch you on the path to a successful future.

Maintain a Challenging Course Load. You should take the most rigorous courses available, and be sure to continue taking college-track subjects. Consider AP courses, where you can earn credit at many colleges.

Stay Active and Involved. Your continued involvement in activities, sports, volunteer work, etc. will help you stay active and focused throughout your final year. A great internship or career-focused job opportunity can help motivate you to start considering your career options. Meaningful and significant experiences will help prepare you to make informed decisions about your education and career goals.

Try Out College Early. If you're interested in pursuing a subject further, and have excelled at your high school classes so far, consider taking a class at a local college. This challenge can help you avoid sliding into an academic slump, and stimulate your interest in the possibilities of college. Another option in many areas is "middle college" or "early college" high schools. These schools, normally located on community and four-year college campuses, allow students to spend their last two years taking classes in both college and high school. Early exposure to college classes introduces you to the rigor of college work while easing your transition from high school.

Sources: *National Commission on the High School Senior Year, The Lost Opportunity of Senior Year; Finding a Better Way – Summary of Findings, 2001. Barth, P., Haycock, K., Huang, S. and Richardson, A., Youth at the Crossroads; Facing High School and Beyond. Washington, DC: The Education Trust, 2000.*

HELPFUL HINTS FOR A VISIT TO A COLLEGE CAMPUS

Important Note: Students may have two college visits in their Junior year and two in their Senior year, with two week prior approval of their grade level assistant principal and a letter from the college or university verifying the visit.

Preparing for a College Campus Visit

Know Before You Go

It may be tempting to just yell “road trip!” and head out to campuses, but you will get more out of your visits if you plan ahead.

Research the College

It is important to know something about the college before you arrive on its campus, especially if you have an interview scheduled.

- Review the viewbooks, course catalogs, and any other materials the college sends to prospective students.
- Spend some time surfing their website.
- Talk to currently enrolled students or alumni about their college. Some college websites let you contact them online, or you can get their contact information from the admission office.

Scheduling Your Trip

Pick a time that is convenient to you, but try to go when classes are in session. That way, you can sit in on a lecture or stay in a dorm overnight. You will only get a true feel for the campus if you are there on a day when classes are in full swing.

Schedule your time on campus, too, to make sure you will have time for everything you want to do:

- Find out how often college tours run, and if you have to sign up in advance
- Be sure to get a map of the school. You do not want to spend half your day trying to park or find the admissions office.
- If an interview is suggested, make an appointment. Also, consider meeting with the financial aid officer.
- If you are curious about a club, program, or a sport, arrange to attend a practice, rehearsal, or meeting.

Pack a Camera and Notebook

Was it X College or Y University that had that excellent exercise equipment in the gym? Where did I talk to that cool psychology professor? You think you will remember everything, but you will be surprised how colleges start to merge after you have seen a few.

What is Important to You

Make a list of what college characteristics are most important to you, so you know what to evaluate. Do you feel overwhelmed in a large lecture hall? Check out the class size. Do you have your heart set on joining a sorority or fraternity? See what the Greek system is like on campus. Is there a particular major that you want to pursue? Talk to current students or professors in that department.

Campus Visit Checklist

Make the Most of Your Trip

Here are things you should not miss while visiting a college. Take a look at this list before planning campus trips to make sure that you allow enough time on each campus to get a sense of what the school life of its students is really like:

- Take a campus tour.
- Have an interview with admissions officer.
- Get business cards and names of people you meet for future contacts.
- Pick up financial aid forms.
- Participate in a group information session at the admissions office.
- Sit in on a class of a subject that interests you.
- Talk to a professor in your chosen major or in a subject that interests you.
- Talk to coaches of sports in which you might participate.
- Talk to a student or counselor in the career center.
- Spend the night in a dorm.
- Read the student newspaper.
- Try to find other student publications – department newsletters, alternative newspapers, literary reviews.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what day-to-day student life is like.
- Eat in the cafeteria.
- Ask a student why he/she chose this college.
- Wander around the campus by yourself.
- Read for a little while in the library and see what it is like.
- Search for your favorite book in the library.
- Ask a student what he/she hates about the college.
- Ask a student what he/she loves about the college.
- Browse in the college bookstore.
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding the campus.