

# *MyKidsCounselor*

*Supporting Kids | Strengthening Parents  
Encouraging Families | Knowing God*

## **Preparing for College Timeline** *For Parents*



*[www.MyKidsCounselor.com](http://www.MyKidsCounselor.com)*

## PREPARING FOR COLLEGE TIMELINE READY, SET, GO! For Parents

### A Word to Parents:

Welcome to one of the greatest challenges and rewards of parenting: helping your kid find his way and direction with his future plans, goals, and education. Throughout the middle school and high school years, you will discover the joy of seeing your kid turn into an adult right before your eyes. Enjoy the process. Enjoy the challenges. Enjoy the rewards. The end goal is that you will be a friend and ally of the adult child that emerges at the end of this period. However, it is very important that you not be that friend just yet. Your kid needs an adult that will be honest with them, stand up and teach them what is right and what is wrong, and always catch them when they fall. They need a parent.

This timeline is a tool to help your family navigate the rough waters ahead. It is truly written for the STUDENT to follow. The parent should only be using it as a guide and reminder to aid their children do the work. The process has changed dramatically in the last few years. The college application and career decision making process is more rigorous and demanding than ever before. The 11<sup>th</sup> grade, junior year of high school, is by far the most rigorous. Your kid will need your help to overcome the tendency to become overwhelmed. It is most important that the kid is the one to paddle through these waters. If they don't do the work, they won't know how to navigate the waters ahead as young adults. It's always about the lesson that the kid can learn. Don't rob them of that critical learning opportunity by pursuing the process for them. However, they desperately need you to guide them and cheer them on. This is a family activity! Encourage them to act proactively and responsibly. If they're having a problem at school, encourage them to seek out adults in their school to help them and advise them. You'll be amazed at the good people God will raise up and use in your kid's life.



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You may be thinking, who is this person to tell me how to parent my kid? In a word, I'm your kid's counselor. I have 30 years of experience working with and advocating for teens. I love them. I love their enthusiasm, I love their sense of adventure, and I love their lack of fear. My words are written after surviving the deep water with many kids and their families. I would love to assist you over the next months and years. Parenting teens is going to be the ride of your life!  
Gwyn

## PRINT AND PLACE ON THE FRIDGE TO CHECK OFF!

### 7<sup>TH</sup> AND 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE:

- Move into honors level course work if at all possible. Challenge yourself in reading, writing, and math.
- Be aware of High School courses you may be currently taking. Find out exactly how your grade will be determined and what you need to do to get the High School credit. Find out exactly what will go on to your High School transcript.
- If you are placed in the advanced math curriculum, find out and think through how this will effect your future class placement.
- Begin to explore career interests. Participate in any career interests experiences like career days, career fairs, or hands on internship experiences.
- Take any necessary admission or placement tests for high school honors programs. Call the high school or District office in the beginning of 8<sup>th</sup> grade for the exact test dates.
- Attend any open house or campus tours of area high school/charter school campuses. Choose the best high school for your interests and abilities, not just for your best friends!



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## 9<sup>th</sup> GRADE:

- Study the High School Graduation requirements. Make sure you are in the appropriate classes for graduation in four years.
- Develop a goal for after you graduate from high school.
- See a guidance counselor to apply for a 504 plan if you have a disability and needed added support at school.
- Begin to research admission requirements for any military programs, universities, colleges, trade schools, or technical schools that you might be interested in attending in four years. Make sure you are in appropriate classes for college admissions.
- Take college preparatory courses and do well in them.
- Take a practice PSAT, SAT or ACT just to see how you do and what areas you will need to focus practice on.
- Meet with a high school counselor and to take an interest survey to determine a career that fits your skills, interests, and personality. Evaluate if your goal for after high school graduation fits with the results of your interest survey.
- Meet with a high school counselor and write a four year course plan based on your post-secondary goal and the results of the interest survey.
- Talk to people working in interesting careers. Ask questions about their education, why they chose their career, and what they like about their work.
- Visit your parents' work place to see if you are interested in their career area.
- Begin to talk to your parents about how you will pay for college or education after high school. Begin to save money and plan.
- Get involved in school/club sports, school student clubs, community service, or church/temple activities. Stay involved all four years of high school.
- Stay on track with homework, tests, and keep your grades up. Your GPA beginning with 9<sup>th</sup> grade is important when applying to college and scholarships.
- Start looking for summer programs offered by colleges and universities that would prepare you or give you a taste of college or a specific career area.
- Begin to visit the State universities in your area. Take a campus tour and talk to an admissions representative.
- Begin creating a personal resume. You will need this for the college application process and for possible scholarship/work opportunities down the road. Begin NOW so you don't forget things that you are currently involved in.



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## 10<sup>th</sup> GRADE:

- Continue to take college preparatory courses in math, science, social studies, foreign languages and English.
- Use elective class choices to try different possible career areas and/or help prepare you for college.
- If you are an athlete, or think you might participate in sports in college, you must complete the NCAA Clearinghouse Registration online at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org).
- Apply for accommodations through CollegeBoard at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and/or ACT at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) if you have a 504 plan in place and anticipate needing accommodations on college testing.
- Sign up in September in your high school Guidance office for the PSAT (Practice or Pre SAT) and the PLAN test (Practice or Pre ACT).
- Take the PSAT in October (same dates across the United States) for practice of the Junior year PSAT.
- Take the PLAN test (Practice or Pre ACT), dates will vary by campus. The PLAN test also has a very good interest inventory included for free.
- Maintain a 3.0 (B) grade point average, especially in your college prep core courses (English, math, science, social sciences, and foreign languages).
- Consider and register for any AP Classes you qualify for during 11<sup>th</sup> Grade.
- Research and Begin to take any exit exams that your state requires for graduation.
- Visit your high school career center for educational requirements for various careers.
- Stay involved in your school activities, sports, community service, and/or church/temple activities.
- Continue to research online any military opportunities, universities, colleges, trade schools, or technical schools you might be interested in and the admission requirements.
- Continue to make college visits with any opportunity to travel to different areas.
- Continue to explore different career opportunities.
- Visit any vocational schools in your area if you are interested in attending next year.
- Attend seminars, workshops, camps, and summer programs that supplement your academic preparation.
- With your parents, continue to plan the financial aspect of your education.



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- If you did well (90<sup>th</sup> percentile or index of 210 or more) on the PSAT this year look for a PSAT prep class during the summer to get ready for the PSAT in October of your junior year. That will be the year that the PSAT qualifies the top 1 percentile of students nationally to be National Merit Semifinalists.

## 11<sup>th</sup> GRADE:

### September

- Apply for a Social Security number if you do not already have one.
- Meet with a college counselor at your school to assess your progress toward your post-secondary goal.
- Check how your name is listed on your school records. Use your exact name on all college/university applications and correspondence and any admissions testing like PSAT, SAT, ACT, or AP testing. Be consistent.
- Work hard in all of your classes to get good grades. Your transcript at the end of this year is the one sent to colleges when you apply next year.
- Get actively involved in extracurricular activities—sports, clubs, and community service. Take on leadership opportunities.
- Register in the guidance area of your school for the PSAT. It is specific dates in October so plan to be available. This is the year that the PSAT qualifies the top 1 percentile of students nationally to be National Merit Semifinalists.
- Practice online at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) for the PSAT.
- Continue to research universities, colleges, trade schools, or technical schools online. Look for important facts like school size, location, weather, etc.
- Continue to research careers online. Look for important facts like pay, education necessary, current job market, etc.
- Find out if a major or program matching your career choice is available at the colleges that you're interested in.
- Attend any In-State College fairs or representative visits in the area.

### October



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- Practice online at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) for the PSAT.
- Take the PSAT exam to gauge how well you'll do on the SAT, compare your skill level with other students, and possibly qualify as a National Merit Semifinalist.
- Take any state exit exams necessary for graduation.
- Research times offered, sign up, and take the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery). This test is necessary for acceptance in the Military and/or it is the one of the best aptitude tests available.
- Attend any Out of State College Fairs available in your area.
- Begin to look at scholarship websites. Set up an account with [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) for scholarships, financial aid, and student loans. Share scholarship websites with your parents.
- Continue creating and adding to a personal resume. You will need this for the college application process and for possible scholarship/work opportunities.

## **November**

- Start a file folder on each university, college, trade school, or technical school you are interest in attending. Note on each admissions requirements (required high school courses and college admissions tests), cost, deadlines, and scholarship/financial aid information.
- Visit any vocational schools in your area if you are interested in attending next year.

## **December**

- Pick up and review PSAT scores with a Guidance Counselor.
- Study for semester exams.
- Register and/or take a SAT or ACT Prep Class or work through test prep materials online on your own.

## **January**

- Attend a financial aid information session in your area with your parents—get informed now for next year.
- Continue to check scholarship sites online.
- Sign up for spring/summer college admission testing. Visit [collegeboard.com](http://collegeboard.com) for the SAT Reasoning and [actstudent.org](http://actstudent.org) for the ACT with or without the Writing portion. Look on college websites to see what test each require. Do not take SAT Subject tests unless the



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schools of your choice require them. Do not take the ACT with Writing unless the school requires it.

- Begin to choose your classes for your senior year. Take either college prep or vocational prep classes. Do not fall into the trap of taking an easy load.
- Take a test SAT or ACT prep class for April/May/June testing if you have not already.

## **February**

- Register for AP Testing. See the Guidance Dept or the AP Coordinator for information.
- Begin application process with your college counselor if you are interested in attending one of the military academies.
- Look into summer programs or internships on college or job sites.
- Take a test SAT or ACT prep class for April/May/June testing if you have not already.

## **March**

- Visit Colleges, Universities, trades schools, and/or technical schools over Spring Break.
- Sign up for summer school if you need to make up any high school credits.
- Take a test SAT or ACT prep class for April/May/June testing if you have not already.

## **April/May**

- Continue to work hard and keep up your grades. Remember this is the last semester grades colleges will see prior to an acceptance decision.
- Prepare for any AP Tests
- Attend any college weekends or college days specifically offered to juniors.
- Apply for a summer job and/or summer program.
- Take your college admissions (SAT Reasoning, SAT Subject, and/or ACT) and AP tests.

## **Summer Prior to 12<sup>th</sup> GRADE:**

- Finalize visits and research of Colleges, Universities, trade schools or technical schools that you are interested in.
- Participate in a summer enrichment program or summer job of some type.
- Do community service.



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- Update your resume and work on your personal statement for college and scholarship application next year.
- Work and save money for post-secondary education.
- Decide by the end of the summer which Universities/Colleges you will apply to. Think in terms of a “dream” school, 2-3 “reach” schools, and 2-3 “safe schools”. Try to limit the number of schools you apply to 5-7—remember each application costs money!
- Look online at each school you are interested in applying to and begin to gather and write down application deadlines, Early Action deadline, Early Decision deadline and the application process for each school. Making a chart with all of your schools and their information is a good idea.

## 12<sup>th</sup> GRADE:

### September

- Register for ACT, SAT Reasoning or SAT Subject Tests (if needed). Hopefully you already took the tests in the spring, but fall is an opportunity to take one or more again. If you do not take any of these tests in the spring, it is required to take either the ACT or the SAT Reasoning to attend a four year college or university by the end of the fall semester of 12<sup>th</sup> Grade.
- Research and begin applying to any of your school choices that use the common application. This application is found at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) and is used by over 500 schools. You only have to apply once for all of your school choices that use it.
- Begin college applications online to all of the other schools of your choice that do not use the common app.
- Make an appointment with your college counselor to request a letter of recommendation, school profile, test scores and high school transcript to the required colleges.
- Send high school transcript to all colleges that you are applying to.
- Ask any teachers for a necessary letter of recommendation.
- Send SAT/ACT scores directly online to any colleges you are applying to. Go to [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) or [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) to send scores.
- Research and attend any college fairs in your area. Check [www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org) for more info.
- Continue to look online at scholarship websites.



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## **October**

- Continue the application process. Note college admission and scholarship deadlines. Work on any required essays.
- If you are an athlete, or think you might participate in sports in college and have not done so already, you must complete the NCAA Clearinghouse Registration online at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org). Send an official high school transcript to the Clearinghouse.
- Download the FAFSA worksheet and if needed the (College Scholarship Service's) CSS Financial Aid PROFILE worksheet to begin to gather the financial information. These will be found at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). and [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).
- Apply for scholarships as they become available.

## **November**

- Finalize your college essays—quality time must be spent on your essays. Ask a teacher at school to edit them for you.
- File scholarship/financial aid applications for your specific colleges by their specific deadlines.
- If applicable, finalize any Honors College applications that are a separate application.

## **December**

- Finalize your college applications prior to the holidays. Check all of the individual college deadlines; however, if you finish prior to the holidays, your life will be more enjoyable. You deserve a nice break!
- Study for semester exams—your senior year is still very important. Many colleges request the 7<sup>th</sup> semester grades and transcript during the spring of your senior year.

## **January**

- Work TOGETHER with your parents to prepare the FAFSA and if needed, the supplemental CSS PROFILE. These forms require Income Tax information so figure your family taxes early. Complete the online FAFSA and PROFILE as soon AFTER January 1<sup>st</sup> as possible. They are found at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). and [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org). The sooner you apply, the better the opportunity to receive money.



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- With your parents, attend any Financial Aid Workshops and/or College Goal Sunday workshops in your area. Take your tax information and financial aid applications with you for any needed assistance.
- Watch for various state and local scholarship opportunities. Many have deadline dates between January and April.
- Don't forget to check out your parents' place of employment for possible scholarships and any foundation or organization that you might qualify for personal reasons, i.e.: health, disability, talent, etc.

## **February**

- Verify with your counselor that a Mid-Year Report has been sent to every college that requires one.
- Register for AP Testing. See the Guidance Dept or the AP Coordinator for information.

## **March**

- Continue to explore scholarship opportunities and complete applications.
- Review your Federal Student Aid Report (SAR) for accuracy when it is received in the mail.
- Register for classes at in-state universities by attending one of their orientation and registration workshops.

## **April**

- Review acceptance and financial aid packages. Visit colleges again, if need be, before your **final decision**.
- Notify the college of your choice to attend and return appropriate paperwork. Notify the schools which you will not attend also.
- Prepare for any AP Tests

## **May/June**

- Take AP Exams and your last high school exams!
- Request a final transcript to be sent to the college/school you will attend and the NCAA Clearing House if applicable.
- Submit enrollment deposit to the school you are committing to go to.



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- Graduate and remember to thank all of the people that have helped you along the way—parents, teachers, school personnel, employers, friends and other family members. Congratulations!



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