

Planning for College

The Junior Year

Month-specific tips

The below information offers month specific steps you will take to prepare.

October

The PSAT scheduled in October. You can sign up in the Guidance office. A fee is required at the time of sign-ups, \$15.00 payable to ALCS. Although we coordinate the ordering and facilitating, we highly recommend you to create an account on the College Board. You can sign up for SAT question of the day for preparation and also register for the scholarship database. The PSAT will help you get the experience and increase knowledge that will help you when you take the SAT which we recommend taking second semester Junior year.

Springtime months: Registering for the ACT or SAT in the spring of your junior year will give you the opportunity to see what your scores are and then re-take the test if you are not satisfied. You will also be placed on various schools' that you select as being interested in mailing lists.

January (second semester) All juniors are scheduled to take Career Studies. In this course you will write a resume, learn how to write a cover letter, fill out a job application and navigate to find online applications. Students will develop a career plan after major research regarding career interests, goals, opportunities, etc. This will be the framework that will lead into a college search. Students are asked to have a flash drive so they can save their information and have it accessible for the senior year and beyond. Students will receive information for online resources to research and find jobs. Detailed information about financial aid will be presented, guidance about the college visit, college application, and important deadlines students must be aware of for the fall. A major culminating activity is the Junior Interview Day where students participate in a face to face interview with 4-6 adult members of our community. Students must dress professionally, shake hands, provide a resume, communicate answers to questions, and follow up with the expected thank you letter. In addition, weekly, a speaker presents to the class. This person may represent: a community college, a 4 year public college, a 4 year University, a military representative, a business person, and also Mrs. Gregory, Program Development Coordinator at ALCS.

Financial Aid Night: This event is marketed to seniors and their parents as they will be filing the FAFSA (Free Application for Student Aid) for their Freshman year beginning in the fall. Parents of other classes are welcome to attend. The information and dates will be posted on the website and also announced

April/May

We coordinate a college visit that all juniors must attend. It is a significant part of the Career Studies curriculum. The goal of this class is for students to have the experience and the exposure to a local, college campus, and begin to see the dynamics, layout, programs, etc. Students will hear about the college application process and financial aid, meal plans, housing options, transportation, intermural sports, and more.

Set up a savings plan for summer earnings.

Are you planning to work during the summer before your senior year of high school? Set up a plan, determining the portion of your earnings you'll save to reduce the amount you may have to borrow for college expenses.

General Tips for the Junior year

The below outline is from Mapping Your Future Inc. This is a fantastic resource offering excellent guidance for college information.

The majority of the things you'll want to do to prepare for college aren't specific to a period of time.

Selecting a school

Start/continue your college search.

This includes attending college fairs and college financial aid sessions. Start to think about visiting some college campuses to see which ones suit you. Continue to research colleges through their websites, college fairs, admissions representatives and applications, books, and college guides. By doing this you will get an idea of what's required and take the mystery out of the process.

You may want to research military academies and colleges. Review websites and meet with military representatives when they visit your school or visit the schools. Most military academies and colleges start the admissions process earlier than traditional colleges and universities. You may need to take the ASVAB test as part of the admissions process.

Careers

- **Explore career interest paths.**
- **Create a resume and save it to a Flash Drive. You can continue to update this as you add jobs, skills, etc. in your future.**

Your resume should talk about yourself outside of school. The school to which you are applying will already know your grades and test scores since these are included on your school transcript. Items that should be included are:

- school activities,
- community activities,
- community service,
- sports,
- awards and recognition,
- hobbies, and
- work experience.

Admissions and preparation

- **Make note of registration deadlines and prepare for the upcoming SAT I and SAT II tests and the ACT assessment.**

When researching colleges, be sure to note whether they require the SAT or the ACT. Some colleges will require or recommend one or the other, others accept either. Your counselor also can provide guidance. Prepare for the test(s) you plan to take. Some states (e.g., Colorado and Illinois) require all public school eleventh-grade students to complete the ACT assessment. For more information, talk with your high school guidance counselor.

- **Meet with your counselor to ensure you are on track for college with your course selection.**

Are the courses you are taking or are scheduled to take in high school meeting college admission requirements? Talk to your counselor about taking more challenging courses such as honors, college prep, or Advanced Placement courses. Ask about any courses that you can take that may help you decide if a particular career direction is right for you. Discuss whether or not you should take the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests. Also, remember to maintain good grades.

- **Read, read, and read some more!**
- **Stay active in extracurricular activities.**

While your grades in high school are important, colleges also look at what you do outside the classroom. They like to see that you are involved in sports, student government, and community activities, and that you take on leadership roles when available.

- **Start visiting colleges.** Take advantage of family travel during vacations. Possibly plan your route to fit in some of your favorite schools.

Paying for school

- **Discuss college finances with your family.**
When performing your college search, you need to know how much your family will be able to contribute towards your college education. Always remember, just because a college may seem expensive and out of your reach, never assume anything. There are several types of financial aid that may enable you to attend a college that may seem too expensive.
- **Save, save, save.**
- **Attend a financial aid night to learn the basics of financial aid.**
Many schools will hold financial aid nights in the fall. Make sure to attend one. You can also search the Internet to find out additional information or contact the Department of Education. If you haven't already, start researching scholarships through the Internet, local businesses, and your guidance counselor's office. If you have already started, continue searching. Register for free online scholarship searches and start to check out scholarships and see if you are a good fit for the requirements.
- **Open a checking and savings account if you have not already done so.**

Advice for parents of juniors

As parents of high school age students, you may question if you have any degree of influence in their decision-making processes. Be reassured that they are listening to you, probably much more often than you think. So what can you do to help them in their search and preparation for college?

- First, show them your support in their quest to gain knowledge, experience and expertise beyond high school.
- Attend financial aid and scholarship presentations while they are juniors. You will be more prepared, and have fewer surprises, than if you wait until they are seniors to take advantage of these presentations.
- Encourage them to build their resume by:
 - taking college prep classes,
 - participating in extracurricular activities, and
 - volunteering at programs outside of school.
- Explore other FREE websites for information on careers, colleges, and ways to pay for college.