

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes in various shades, including light lime green, medium green, and dark forest green. The shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, creating a dynamic, layered effect. The central text is positioned on a white background that is partially framed by these green shapes.

Getting Ready for College

A 9-12 Guide for Students

What are colleges really looking for?

- ▶ School Achievement- GPA and rigor of courses taken
- ▶ Test Scores- ACT and/or SAT
- ▶ Essays
- ▶ Activities- volunteer work, clubs/school organizations, community organizations, part-time employment
- ▶ Recommendations- teacher & counselor

School Achievement

9th Grade- enroll in a few advanced classes if you think you can handle the workload comfortably.

This is the year many students find out how to balance school work with outside activities.

Work on study habits, learn how to seek help when needed, and start becoming more independent with organization and taking care of business.

*Remember, our on-level classes are considered college-preparatory!

10th Grade- consider adding an advanced course if you did not take any freshman year. Now that you know which subjects are your strengths, look for advanced courses in those areas.

Continue to become more independent in taking care of school responsibilities and work on your time management skills.

School Achievement

11th Grade-Many consider this the most important year for college admissions. Colleges will request a 6-semester transcript with applications. The cumulative GPA at the end of junior year is what the colleges will see.

College admissions officers want to see an upward trend in grades, so if the first two years of high school were not as good as you wanted, this is your year to shine!

12th Grade- Colleges will ask for your senior classes when you complete applications. Continue to take the most challenging course load that you can handle. Skipping math in senior year is **NOT** a good idea!

Watch out for senioritis! Many colleges will rescind offers of admission, put students on academic probation, or reduce scholarship offers if a student has a decline in grades senior year!

A final high school transcript will be sent to the college you will be attending.

Test Scores

9th Grade- take a challenging course load and learn as much as you can.

10th Grade-PSAT in October (this is only for practice!)

11th Grade-PSAT in October (also a practice test, but can qualify students for National Merit scholarships and recognition)

SAT and/or ACT in early spring. This leaves time in late spring/early summer for taking one or both one more time before senior year.

12th Grade- possibly take one or both tests one more time in the fall. Some schools will take scores even after the application deadlines, especially when considering students for scholarships.

College Admission Essays

- ▶ Admissions officers look for well-written essays that demonstrate a student's ability to express ideas logically in writing.
- ▶ They also use them as a way to get to know the student.
- ▶ It is very important that the essay(s) be written by the student and not “over-worked” by parents or other adults.

College Admission Essays

9-10th grades- Pay attention in English classes! Work to develop writing skills.

11th grade- Many English 3 teachers will help students begin working on admission essays in class.

Start thinking about experiences that have meant a lot to you or shaped your life in some way. These experiences can be turned into great essays!

Many colleges will release essay prompts in the spring or early summer. Get started on your essays early so you have plenty of time to get them “just right”.

12th grade- Finish your essays and ask a parent or another adult who knows you well to take a look at them. English teachers are a great resource to help make sure you don't have spelling or grammatical errors.

Remember: The essays should be *your* work and not be too heavily influenced by parents or other adults!

*If an essay is “optional”, it is a good idea to do it!

Activities

- ▶ College admissions officers are trying to create a diverse population of students with a wide variety of interests.
- ▶ They are looking for students who have demonstrated commitment to a few quality activities, not for students who just join multiple activities for the sake of listing them on their resume.
- ▶ **Think depth, not breadth!**
- ▶ Being involved in activities shows that a student is able to balance academics with other interests.
- ▶ **Why do community service?** Colleges are looking for applicants that are willing to give back to their communities while in college. And....It's good to help others!

Activities

- ▶ **9th Grade-** Look for a few activities (clubs, community organizations, sports, the arts, school leadership, etc.) that you are interested in becoming involved in.
- ▶ **10th & 11th Grades-** Look for ways within the activities you are involved in to develop leadership skills. You don't have to be class president to be a leader! Sign up for committees or volunteer to take the lead on a project. Become a mentor for the younger students in your organization.
- ▶ **12th Grade-**Continue to be involved. The leadership and time management skills you learn by being involved in activities will be invaluable as you enter your chosen profession.

Word to the wise: Start your resume early! Keeping track of activities as you do them will save a lot of time and effort when you start the college application process!

Recommendations

- ▶ Colleges generally expect your recommenders to be teachers from junior year. These teachers are the ones who will have known you for the longest period of time and most recently.
- ▶ Not every college will require recommendation letters, but many do.
- ▶ The teacher recommendation addresses how you were as a student. For instance, your work ethic, willingness to work through challenges, respect toward teachers and peers, academic promise, etc.
- ▶ The counselor recommendation addresses a broader view of you as a student and member of your school and community.

Recommendations

9th-10th Grades- Learn how to talk to your teachers by asking for help when needed, contribute to class discussions, and practice making a good impression.

11th Grade- Make a good impression on your teachers!

- ❖ Be a leader in class.
- ❖ Be a good citizen in the classroom and the hallways (teachers *are* watching to see how you interact with your peers).
- ❖ Be on time to class and turn assignments in on time.
- ❖ Seek help from teachers when you need it.

Start thinking of one or two of your teachers who would be good recommenders. It's a good idea to approach those teachers near the end of junior year to see if they would be willing to write a letter for you.

Junior conferences- This is a great time to let your counselor know about your college and career goals! Your counselor will need that information if she ends up writing a letter for you!

12th Grade- It's time to ask for those letters! If a teacher has already agreed to write a letter for you, talk to them about it again. Communication is the key when letting your recommenders know your plans for college applications. Be sure to talk with your counselor if you need a counselor recommendation.

Remember to follow up with all of your recommenders before the application deadlines. Your college applications are *your* responsibility!

Researching Colleges

- ▶ There are thousands of colleges and universities in the United States that offer programs for just about every student.
- ▶ Students are generally more successful in college if they find one that is a good fit *for them*.
- ▶ The key to finding the right college for you is doing research.

Researching Colleges

9th and 10th Grades- Use Naviance to help figure out which careers might be a good fit for you by completing the career interest profiler and personality surveys. The more you know about your interests and possible majors, the easier the college research process will be later.

Use college research tools in Naviance to look for colleges that offer what you are looking for.

❖ Not sure what you are looking for in a college? The filters in SuperMatch and the college search programs can give you helpful hints!

If possible, visit some colleges. Even if you just visit local schools, you can start getting a sense of what kinds of campuses are appealing to you (or not).

Researching Colleges

11th Grade- In addition to continuing to use the college search tools in Naviance, it's time to really focus on the research process by:

- ❖ Going to College Fair (usually held in late October or early November at CSHS).
- ❖ Take advantage of the Campus Chats that occur nearly daily at CSHS.
- ❖ College campus visits- it's advisable to schedule an official visit in advance with the admissions office. If possible, schedule the visit for a time when students will be on campus.
- ❖ Colleges consider whether a student has visited a campus when they make admission decisions.
- ❖ The state gives one “free” college visit per semester to juniors and seniors!

Start saving your list of colleges in Naviance under the “Colleges I’m Thinking About” section.

Researching Colleges

12th Grade- Narrow down your list of schools to a manageable list of those schools you want to apply to.

There is no magic number, but a good rule of thumb is 2 safety schools, 2 probable schools, and 2 reach schools.

- ❖ **Safety School:** a school that you will almost certainly be admitted to.
- ❖ **Probable School:** a school where your GPA, test scores, and other features look very similar to those of recently admitted students.
- ❖ **Reach School:** a school that you meet the admission criteria but you may not have the same qualifications as most students who have been admitted.

Find out what the application deadlines are and get details about how to apply.

Go visit campuses one more time for those schools you are trying to decide between. This can be helpful later when all of your acceptance letters come in and it's your turn to choose who you say **yes** to!