

Getting Ready for College Year by Year

8th Grade

The grades that a student earns in the eighth grade are not used in computing a student's GPA or rank. Nevertheless, the eighth grade is an important year for the following reasons:

- Grades may determine placement in ninth grade classes, particularly math and foreign language.
- The development of good study skills and time management is crucial for success in high school.

· Many of the ninth grade classes are predetermined, but the spring of eighth grade is an excellent time to map out a proposed

four-year plan for high school.

- Colleges and scholarship committees like to see well-rounded, active students. Students who are involved in activities seem

to enjoy high school more and generally have greater academic success. Eighth graders should enter the ninth grade ready

to “sign up” for activities that they will enjoy and that will make each participating student a more important part of the high

school community.

- At each grade level in high school students will receive information on the college application process and receive timely

handouts concerning college admission and financial aid. In addition, parent meetings and workshops will be held to assist

families with the college search and financial aid.

9th Grade

When a student becomes a freshman, everything starts to count. There are a few schools that do not look specifically at grades from the ninth grade, but very few. However, the VHHS grade average with which students apply does include ninth grade, so academic performance here is more important than it has been in previous years in school. Freshman grades are used in determining GPA and class rank, and freshman activities, honors, and awards can all be listed on college and scholarship applications.

- Make sure you keep up with all progress reports and quarter grades and do not ignore a suggestion from a teacher to come

for extra help. Students are expected to seek the help they need. This approach begins in earnest in the ninth grade and it is

part of the preparation for the independence necessary in college. Parents should provide encouragement and support for

their students, especially if they need academic improvement.

- Get involved in extracurricular activities as well as academics. Many college applications ask students for evidence of

leadership, depth of involvement, and extent of commitment. Clubs meet during the school day so that all students may have

an opportunity to participate.

- Participate in activities outside of school (church, synagogue, scouts, club sports). Any type of volunteer work or community

service is particularly impressive on an application (as is a paid job).

- Keep a record of school activities, honors, awards, leadership positions, employment, volunteer work, community service, etc.

Update the list on a regular basis, but particularly at the end of the school year. Opening a file on the computer is an easy

way to keep track, but also keep a paper file in which you place any relevant paper documents.

- In the spring, students should review their four-year plans when they meet with their counselor to be sure they are taking the

classes that are most appropriate for their goals.

- The counselor will meet individually with each student to establish a four-year plan, check course schedule, and review

academic progress.

- Find meaningful activities for the summer. Students could work, volunteer, or take classes. Many excellent programs are

available on college campuses, and applications and brochures are readily available in the Guidance Office, particularly

during second semester.

- There will be a College Information Night in September at which information will be distributed and questions will be

answered.

- A Selective Out-of-State College Information Night will be held in October to provide students and parents with information

about the selective college application and acceptance process.

10th Grade

By the tenth grade, students should be acclimated to life in high school. The sophomore year should be a year of personal growth. In addition to working hard in school and being involved in activities, sophomores should be identifying personal abilities, aptitudes, and interests. This should be a strong academic year, consistent with or improving upon the ninth grade performance.

- The PSAT is administered in October during the school day. This initial score can predict future performance on

standardized tests. Sophomores with strong grade point averages are encouraged to take this test.

- Each student should make a commitment to an activity and/or sport that he or she can stick with throughout high school and

in which he or she might eventually emerge as a leader.

- Start to explore and discuss college options. Visit college campuses when you are traveling, and begin to determine exactly

what you might want from your college experience.

- Meet individually with appropriate counselor for course selection for eleventh and twelfth grades, discussing changes to the

four-year plan, reviewing academic progress and extracurricular activities.

- There will be a College Information Night in September at which information will be distributed and questions will be

answered.

- Students considering a selective out-of-state school should attend the Selective Out-of-State College Night held in October.

- Students should update their files of activities and honors.

11th Grade

The junior year is the most important academic year for college preparation. Juniors should seriously consider their options, take standardized tests, and make college visits. This is the year that students should look closely at themselves to help determine which colleges or universities would be good matches.

- Students attend meetings with college representatives visiting the high school campus.

- Consider using Spring Break for college visits.

- PSAT taken in October for National Merit consideration and last practice for SATs.

- Students receive a *Junior Information Book* containing testing and college planning calendar, an explanation of the

importance of junior year, and other relevant articles from the Guidance Department. Students should take SAT I and ACT

in the spring, and consider taking SAT II tests if planning to apply to selective colleges.

- There will be a College Information Night in September at which information will be distributed and questions will be

answered.

- A Selective Out-of-State College Night will be held in October to provide students and parents with information about the

selective college application and acceptance process.

- Students may make individual appointments with college counselor during the spring semester to begin their college plans.

- A Career Day will be held in the spring. Each student will have the opportunity to shadow a person in a career of his or her

interest.

- Student “Need a Rec” packet and resume should be completed in Family Connection.
- By year’s end, students should have a list of schools, including “reach” schools, “possible” schools, and “likely” schools.
- Even though students have matured considerably, parents should not relinquish their responsibility to monitor academic

progress.

- Students should again use the summer to explore a passion (job, internship, academic course work, sports camp, travel, community service). Begin to collect applications for the schools on your list.

12th Grade

Everything comes together in the senior year. Students will see the rewards of their hard work. All the planning now must be clarified. Academic performance and school leadership remains important throughout the senior year.

- Students should update resumes on Family Connection during first two weeks at school.
- Students planning to apply to selective colleges should make interview appointments with the college counselor in September

and October.

- Senior and College Counselors meet with seniors in English classes in August to review and distribute the Senior Information

Booklet.

- Students complete applications to Alabama and Auburn in August or September.
- Students attend meetings with college representatives on VHHS campus.
- Students should contact teachers for recommendations with a list of schools to which they are applying and addressed,

stamped envelopes for each.

- Students wanting to retake ACT or SAT should register for fall administrations. Check application due dates for colleges. Any

counselor/school reports needing completion or rec letters needed must be given to the college counselor 3 weeks before

due date.

- Students request transcripts from registrar.

- Applications are filed. Early Decision and Rolling Decision applications should be mailed by the end of October. Early

Decision II applications should be mailed in December or first of January.

- Arrange with registrar to have mid-year transcript sent if required.

- Parents should complete the FAFSA form and any other forms required by their institutions to be considered for financial aid

as soon after Jan. 1 as possible.

- Second semester grades remain crucial to most students. Avoid senioritis! It can be fatal to college admission.

- Students notify college counselor of all college admissions decisions, the good and the bad.

- Send deposit to school of choice.

- If the student has been placed on a waiting list at a school that is a top choice, he should notify the admissions office in writing

that their institution is his first choice. Also inform college counselor. Most colleges will not even determine whether or not

they will go to the waitlist until after May 1, therefore it is crucial that the student send a deposit to one of the schools at which

he has been accepted.

- Final transcripts are sent to the school at which the student plans to matriculate.