

4-Year High School to College Checklist

Getting into College is a 4-year process, but with good planning it can be fun, interesting experience. Use the following information as a guideline for you as you progress through your 4 years of high school.

Freshman Year

As you enter high school you are probably not thinking about applying to colleges. However, anyone planning to go to college should remember these important points for their freshman year.

Academics:

- ✓ Study, study, study! Starting in 9th grade your grades contribute to your overall GPA.
- ✓ Colleges care about what courses you are taking so pick courses that challenge you. Most colleges require 4 years of English, 3 years of math, 3 years of science, 3 years of social science and 2 years of a foreign language. However, highly selective institutions want to see more than the minimal requirements.

Activities:

- ✓ GET INVOLVED!!!! You are developing talents and interests that will catch a college's eye. Participating in school or community-based activities helps you to explore possible career interests. There are also great ways to get to know other students.
- ✓ Continue activities during the summer and find programs that build on your favorite subjects, extracurricular activities, or hobbies.

Legwork:

- ✓ Begin to talk with your parents about your thoughts on college. Let them know your plans so that together you can think about the financial piece and plan accordingly.
- ✓ Develop good habits such as study skills and sleep! These good habits will carry you through high school and college.

Sophomore Year

Now that you have established yourself in high school, you can begin thinking about test scores and continue focusing on grades.

Academics:

- ✓ Grades are still contributing to your GPA so keep working!
- ✓ Take the PLAN test seriously and use it as a tool to gauge your strengths and weaknesses. As of now, we do not know if the state will be giving the PLAN test.

Activities:

- ✓ Continue with the activities you started your freshman year and start some new ones. These activities cannot only be great experiences but also lead to some wonderful compelling college essays.
- ✓ Plan to use your summer wisely. Work, volunteer, play sports, or take summer classes, it will pay off!!!

Legwork:

- ✓ Start exploring college websites and write down things that appeal to you. Decide which characteristics are important to you such as the size of the school, distance from home, extracurricular activities, and cost.
- ✓ Start talking about career interests with your parents
- ✓ Explore information on colleges and careers on Career Cruising.

Junior Year

Essays and testing and APs, oh my! This is an important year as much of what you do will represent a big chunk of the data colleges will use for admission. This can also be a time of leadership outside of the world of academics. Explore activities that interest you so that you can flourish!

Academics:

- ✓ Continue to take or seek out challenging courses but watch out for academic overload. You want to get the best grades you can get but you also want to stay sane.
- ✓ These will be the most recent grades your colleges will have when you apply next year. Therefore, study hard and do not hesitate to see help from a teacher or other resource necessary.
- ✓ Speak up in class. You will need to ask teachers for college recommendations. They can't know you without hearing your thoughts.
- ✓ Discuss testing plans with your parents and counselor. Ask about ways to get some ACT practice and tips before taking the test in the spring. Remember, you can take the ACT more than once so don't worry if you don't get your ideal score the first time.
- ✓ Meet with your counselor to make sure you are on your way to meeting your graduation requirements.

Activities:

- ✓ Develop a leadership role in some of your activities. This shows that you've worked hard, are dedicated to an activity, and play well with others.
- ✓ Begin making a resume or brag sheet of activities, academic experiences, hobbies, and awards. This helps you take inventory of all you've done.

Legwork:

- ✓ Once you have an initial score on your ACT or SAT, talk with your counselor and begin to build a college list.
- ✓ Make plans for college visits on your days off and over the summer. Take notes during each visit.

- ✓ Attend college fairs such as the Annual Kankakee Area College Fair, Monday, September 14, 2015 at Kankakee Community College from 5:00pm-8:00pm. Talk with the representatives at these fairs. They can give you a feel for what the college is like and they will be good as future contact.
- ✓ Think about your interest in a college major to make sure that you are signing up for appropriate courses during your senior year.
- ✓ Look into potential scholarship possibilities by talking with Mr. Sarsany.
- ✓ Attend College Prep Night in the Fall. It's not just for seniors.

Senior Year

Almost done! This is a year of hard work and continued college preparation. Colleges can and will rescind offers to students who slack off.

Academics:

- ✓ Make sure you have completed your graduation requirements and are meeting the course requirements of the colleges on your lists.
- ✓ Your admission is contingent upon a consistent academic performance on the final transcript. Keep up the hard work!
- ✓ Take the ACT or SAT again if you feel you need to boost your score for college admission or scholarship consideration.

Activities:

- ✓ Finish your list of activities and make sure your counselor gets a copy so they can write an accurate letter of recommendation for you.

Legwork:

- ✓ **September/October:** Review your college lists with your counselor and parents. Take note of their application deadlines and apply accordingly. Order your transcript either through Career Cruising or Guidance office.
- ✓ **November/December:** Keep track of your deadlines and fill out each application carefully. Write and edit your essays and give them to your English teacher to proofread. Send your official ACT score to the colleges you are applying to. This is done through the ACT website. Your ACT score is on official transcript so you may not have to do this.
- ✓ **January/February:** A month from the date you submitted your application, call colleges and confirm that it is complete. Attend FAFSA Night at Beecher High School. Many colleges require FAFSA. Earlier the better!!!!
- ✓ **March/April:** As decisions arrive stay calm and breathe! Explore the colleges where you've been accepted. Visit the campuses again. Make sure the environment is a good fit for you.
- ✓ **May 1:** Make your college decision official by sending in your deposit. Finally! Double check to make sure your final transcript is sent to the college.