



COLLEGE PLANNER

for High School Students

College Access Program

Freshman and Sophomore Years

- Each year in high school is important if you want to keep your options open for life after graduation. Whether you are planning to go to work, to a training program or to a college directly after school, the courses you plan to take in high school will matter. To keep your options open and to plan for college you should take the following courses in high school:
 - English: 4 years of college preparatory English
 - Mathematics: 4 years of college preparatory mathematics, including at least Algebra 1 & II and Geometry
 - Science: 3 years of college preparatory science (with laboratory) such as Chemistry or Physics
 - Foreign Language: at least 2 years of a single foreign language, such as Spanish or French
 - Social Studies: 3 years
 - Electives: Students generally may select additional courses from the categories listed above, as well as computer science, visual and performing arts and humanities.
- Join the College Access Program or a program like it in your school for continued support toward your college preparation.
- Begin to use internet websites which provide a significant amount of information to help you learn about careers, colleges, college costs and financial assistance options. Check with your teachers or College Access Center to get internet addresses and other internet information.
- Request from your school the opportunity to take the (PSAT/NMSQT) Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. It's a standardized test that provides firsthand practice for the SAT. It also gives you a chance to enter NMSC scholarship programs and gain access to college and career planning tools.
- Begin exploring different career opportunities and the postsecondary education required for these careers. Use free websites including The Internet Career Connection - www.iccweb.com and Education Planner - www.educationplanner.org to take a career assessment or an interest inventory to help you learn more about your interests, talents and skills. Talk with the College Access Program, your teachers and your guidance counselor for more help with career exploration.
- Become a part of student government, school newspapers, an athletic team, a school club, a community agency volunteer, a band or orchestra, dance team, a youth group at church or anything that interests you and will either enhance skills you already have or give you new ones. Look for a job to give you experience and money. All these things will help you become the well-rounded student who college admission officers value.
- Increase the amount of reading you do outside of schoolwork. Read newspapers every day and magazines and novels with subjects you enjoy.
- Research and register for summer enrichment programs and internships to have new experiences and develop new skills.
- Cost: Do not let the cost of a college education scare you away. There are many kinds of financial aid programs available and the College Access Program staff is available to help you understand and apply for aid. Visit your College Access Center to discuss how to finance your college education.
- Family: Discuss college with your family. Take your parents or guardians with you to a College Access Center.

Champions for Quality Public Education

Junior Year

Summer

- Regularly schedule time in the summer to continue to read newspapers, magazines and especially novels with subjects you enjoy. Consider making another visit with your parents or guardians to a College Access Center.
- Continue to discuss college and education with your family.

September

- Join the College Access Program or a program like it in your school for continued support toward your college preparation.
- Register for the Preliminary SAT Test (PSAT) held in October.
- Find out about and attend any scheduled college fairs held in your school or in the community.
- Sign up for high school extracurricular activities.
- Continue career exploration throughout junior year.

October

- Take the PSAT. Test fees can be waived in some situations. Ask your guidance office about Fee Waivers.
- Have a family discussion about tentative college plans.
- Start exploring information about colleges you might attend. Talk with your high school guidance counselor and teachers.
- Collect information from college fairs and web sites, attend college presentations at your high school, read college guides and visit the nearest College Access Center.

November/December

- Attend the Philadelphia National College Fair and/or the Performing Arts Fair in the fall.
- Find out the following about colleges: application procedures, admission requirements (standardized test scores, grade point averages and class rank), size, location, fees, tuition, room and board costs, student activities, courses or major offerings and financial aid procedures.

January/February

- Review senior year course selection, graduation requirements and college plans with your guidance counselor or visit a College Access Center for assistance.
- Sign up for an SAT/ ACT preparation course. Look online for courses, assistance or helpful preparation tools like “Question of the Day” that you can find on test preparation websites.

March/April

- Register for the Spring SAT/ ACT tests.
- Begin narrowing down your list of colleges and begin to consider the colleges to which you will apply.
- Check with colleges, your school or other programs in your community for scheduled trips to college campuses.
- Register for SAT Subject tests (optional). Some colleges require the SAT Subject tests. Be sure to research the admission requirements of colleges in which you are interested.

May/June/Summer

- May/June: Take the SAT and/or ACT.
- If you are interested in visual or performing arts as a career, ask about developing your portfolio or audition.
- Gather applications, forms, catalogs, websites and information about financial aid for chosen colleges from your guidance office and the nearest College Access Center. Email, call or write to college admission offices to obtain information.
- Investigate the process of applying on-line using college web sites. Computers with internet connections are available at all College Access Centers and may be available at your school or at your local library. Also check with your school and the College Access Center to get internet addresses and other internet information. (See the Resource Guide on page 4)
- Research private sources of scholarships and other forms of financial aid including colleges, businesses, private foundations, labor unions, government agencies, ethnic, veteran, religious, fraternal, high school and civic organizations. Request scholarship applications from these sources. Use scholarship websites to start your research.
- Start developing essays for college and scholarship applications.
- Ask teachers for recommendations required for many colleges and some scholarship applications.
- Check with your counselor or academic advisor to verify graduation credits and requirements.



Senior Year



September

- Discuss higher education plans with your family and guidance counselor. Consider college choices and financial planning.
- Continue gathering college information and application online/paper forms. Ask teachers for positive letters of recommendation.
- Continue to work on college applications, and ask guidance counselors if you qualify for application fee waivers to help pay for the application fees.
- Register for the SAT and/or ACT tests (or any other required admission test).
- Choose 3 to 6 colleges to which you will send applications. Choose these colleges in a range from likely-to-be admitted to competitive.
- Be sure to pay close attention to the admission and financial aid application deadlines. Keep records of all correspondence.
- If applying for early decision, begin preparing the application no later than September.

October/November

- Attend the Philadelphia National College Fair in the fall. (See Resource Guide on page 4)
- Register for or re-take the SAT or ACT test offered in these months (or any other required test for admission).
- Continue to complete and send college applications for admission and financial aid (usually online). Make sure first report card grades are included / sent. Be sure to include the appropriate fees and print / make copies of everything before sending. Keep records of all correspondence.
- Make arrangements for college interviews. Interviews are often recommended and sometimes required.
- Make sure to visit those colleges you are seriously considering and to which you have been accepted. Talk with current students, sit in on classes, and check retention rates and support services for first year students. If you cannot visit, research online using websites, social media, and contact colleges to speak with professors and students.

December

- Register for or re-take the SAT/ACT test offered this month (or any other required admission test).
- Learn which financial aid forms are required for you to complete for each college. (i.e. FAFSA, CSS Profile, PHEAA)
- Continue to apply for any private sources of scholarships or any other forms of financial aid. (significant resources online. See Resource Guide page 4)

January

- Investigate applying for financial aid using internet web sites. In most cases the online FAFSA is used to apply for financial aid. (A small number of students may be asked to complete a paper version because of special circumstances)
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to apply for grants from the Federal Government and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA).
- Confirm with each college the deadline for each financial aid form for which you are required to complete. (Some colleges may have different deadlines for the FAFSA, CSS Profile and/or the college's own financial aid forms). Keep copies of all correspondence.

February/March

- Ask counselors to send second report period grades to colleges if this hasn't already been done.
- Develop a direct contact at the financial aid offices of those schools at which you have been accepted. Use this contact periodically to check on the status of your financial aid applications.
- Complete any additional financial aid forms from institutions or state aid agencies (PHEAA in PA).

April/May/June

- Keep track of acceptances, wait list and denial letters as well as financial aid award letters.
- Reply promptly to colleges that offer admission. Reply dates are usually up to May 1.
- After applying for federal grants you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR). You will have to check these forms for corrections and follow all other instructions.
- Promptly respond to offer for summer program participation. Summer Programs can enhance freshmen year success.
- Promptly submit deposits required for admission and housing to the college you will attend.
- Pay attention to deadlines.

July/August

- Off you go to college! Congratulations! Read and follow instructions on arrival dates and what to bring or pack.
- Don't miss your orientation and registration days.



RESOURCE GUIDE

Philadelphia Education Fund College Access Program and the Philadelphia Scholars

www.philaedfund.org

The mission of the Philadelphia Education Fund is to improve the quality of public education in Philadelphia and the region, so that youth are prepared for college and careers.

Its College Access Program provides expert assistance and resources on college selection, financial aid and scholarships. Scholars Fund provides last dollar scholarships to eligible students.

Federal Financial Aid Information

Contact (800) 433-3243

Gives information on federal Pell Grants and provides brochures for other sources of federal aid.

FAFSA Application

www.fafsa.ed.gov

Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The FAFSA is used to apply for all federal financial aid.

PHEAA

www.pheaa.org

Philadelphia – (215) 735-2877
(800) 233-0557

Provides information on applying for state grants and checking state grant application status. Appropriate for high school and middle school students, parents and educators.

College Board

www.collegeboard.com

Provides information on preparing for the PSAT, SAT and other College Board standardized tests. Provides information links to two and four-year college websites, financial aid and scholarship resources.

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)

www.nacacnet.org

This college membership organization coordinates the annual National College Fair and provides a wealth of information on college preparation.

The College Fund – The United Negro College Fund

www.uncf.org/

Contact (215) 925-9044

The College Fund raises money for the 39 black private colleges. The office can provide college and scholarship information on UNCF schools.

FinAid.org

www.finaid.org

This award-winning site has grown into the most comprehensive source of student financial aid information, advice and tools -- on or off the web.

U.S. Department of Education

www.ed.gov/students/landing.jhtml

Provides information regarding the federal grant (PELL), loans and college preparation information for students, parents and educators. This website links to the on-line Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form.

Education Planner

www.educationplanner.org

Comprehensive college and career planning website that includes, college selection, scholarship searches and career assessment tools.

Scholarships. Com

www.scholarships.com

Provides information and assistance with finding and applying for scholarships and other forms of financial aid.

Center for Student Opportunity

www.csopportunity.org

A non-profit organization dedicated to promoting higher education opportunities for first generation and historically underserved college bound students.

College. Gov

www.college.gov/wps/portal

The U.S. Department of Education college preparation website appropriate for high school and middle school students, parents and educators.

COLLEGE ACCESS CENTERS

CENTER CITY

The Gallery I
Street Level
9th & Market Streets
Philadelphia, PA 19107
215-574-1341

WEST PHILADELPHIA

4548 Market Street
Mailbox # R.16
Philadelphia, PA 19139
215-476-2227

The College Access Program is part of the Philadelphia Education Fund a 501 (c) (3) organization. For further information, call or write a College Access Center or the Ed Fund office. College Access Program, Philadelphia Education Fund, 1709 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Suite 700, Philadelphia, PA 19103

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