

# Focus on Your Future!

## Freshman (9th Grade) High School Planning Checklist

### September–June

- Inform your counselor that you are planning to attend college and that your schedule of classes must include college preparatory courses.
- Get in the habit of reviewing admission requirements for the colleges you might consider upon graduation. Make certain the courses you have chosen and the academic level are consistent with these requirements.
- Develop your interest in extra-curricular and community activities. Colleges look for students who are involved, who have a highly developed talent or skill, and who have attained leadership positions.
- Learn to type and word process (at a minimum), and improve your ability to take notes and prepare for exams.
- Review literature available on preparing for college entrance exam: PSAT/NMSQT, SAT ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)) and ACT ([www.act.org](http://www.act.org)).
- Get in the habit of reading for pleasure each day. Reading will increase your general knowledge and improve your vocabulary.
- Read selected books from a college-bound book list. See your librarian or English teacher for this information.
- Begin exploring financial aid for college. Start and maintain a savings account.
- Complete an *Individual Academic Career Plan*.
- Create a personal file or portfolio that contains copies of your report cards, certificates presented to you, lists of awards and honors you receive, and lists of all school and community clubs/organizations including all offices you hold.
- Strive for academic excellence and regular school attendance, which will result in an exemplary academic record.
- Attend classes to prepare you for the PSAT/NMSQT.
- Begin to research general information on colleges and universities you are considering.

# Focus on Your Future!

- Explore financial aid and scholarship opportunities so that you will know far in advance of your senior year what is expected of you.
- Keep adding to your savings account. Every bit helps!
- Look for summer enrichment programs held on college campuses. Colleges look for students who use their summers to develop themselves academically and socially.
- Volunteer, Volunteer, Volunteer!!! Quality is more important than quantity. Choose something you like and stick with it!
- If you are experiencing academic challenges, contact your counselor or teacher for information about an academic Check Sheet.

## Sophomore (10th Grade) High School Planning Checklist

### August–September

- Inform your counselor that you are planning to attend college and that your schedule of classes must include college preparatory classes.
- Discuss college plans with your parents and high school counselor.
- Register to take the PSAT/NMSQT. Prepare by taking practice tests on ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)) or in the student bulletin, which you will receive when you register for the PSAT/NMSQT.
- Continue to participate in extra-curricular and community activities.
- Attend the Senior/Parent College Information night at your school.
- Keep adding money to that college savings account.

### October–December

- Attend the Centex College Fair on October 19, 2005 at a location to be determined.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT (Wednesday, October 12, 2005).

# Focus on Your Future!

## **Sophomore (10th Grade) High School Planning Checklist Continued**

- Continue to review admission requirements for the colleges you might consider attending upon graduation.
- Make certain that the courses that you have chosen and the academic level are consistent with your college admission requirements.
- Look for opportunities to talk to college students home for the holidays, especially if they attend a school you are interested in attending.
- Complete your *Individual Academic Career Plan*.

### **January–May**

- Continue to work diligently in the classroom and to improve your grades.
- Keep track of your grades and attendance with a Check Sheet.
- When you are signing up for classes for next year, make sure you are on track to graduate (listen to your counselor).
- Obtain information from your counselor about leadership opportunities available in your community.
- Sign up for a dual credit course for the summer.
- Plan activities for the summer. Don't just sit around and watch TV.
- Check with your counselor about scholarship opportunities available for sophomores.
- Look for summer enrichment programs at college campuses. Colleges look for students who use their summers to develop themselves academically and socially.

## **Junior (11th Grade) High School Planning Checklist**

### **August–September**

- Discuss college plans with your parents and high school counselor.
- Learn the dates for PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, and ACT.
- Register before the deadline because it costs you more if you register late.

# Focus on Your Future!

- Prepare by taking practice tests, or college admission test preparation classes.
- Enroll in courses that will prepare you for college and/or a career.
- Check your credits carefully. It is your responsibility to keep up with required credits and your progress toward graduation.

## **October–December**

- Attend the Centex College Fair on October 19, 2005 at a location to be determined.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT (Wednesday, October 12, 2005).
- Begin planning with your counselor regarding your choice of colleges.
- Consult college websites to request catalogs, descriptive materials, housing and financial aid information.
- Take advantage of information provided by college representatives who visit your campus.
- Complete an *Individual Academic and Career Plan*.
- For Practice ONLY!! Complete the Texas Common Application form [www.applytexas.org](http://www.applytexas.org) and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) (**Remember this is a FREE application.** It is not necessary to pay for this service.)

## **January–May**

- Complete the AISD application form (see page 49 of this booklet for the forms' website)
- Search for financial aid and scholarship sources. (see the AISD scholarship website: [austinisd.org/academics/scholarship](http://austinisd.org/academics/scholarship))
- Register for the May SAT and/or June ACT
- Prepare yourself for the ACT and/or SAT before you take the test. (take the practice tests on [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and [www.act.org](http://www.act.org))
- Review your credits and make sure that you are on-track for graduation (see your counselor if you are in doubt).
- If you plan to participate in Division I or II athletics complete the NCAA application (See your Registrar or Counselor for this form).

# Focus on Your Future!

## Junior (11th Grade) High School Planning Checklist Continued

- If there are additional courses needed for graduation on the Recommended High School Program, consult with your counselor for courses offered in summer school, correspondence, credit-by-exam or dual credit.
- Request in writing, letters of recommendation from your junior teachers, which you can use your senior year in applying for college and scholarships.

### June–August

- Prepare a resume. This information is extremely important in completing college applications next year. (*See the Appendix for a sample resume.*)
- Contact admission offices to set up a campus tour and an appointment with a college representative. This is when you can ask all of your questions, so have your list ready.
- Write an essay about your future goals and commitments for use with your college and scholarship applications.

## Senior (12th Grade) High School Planning Checklist

### August–September

- Attend the Senior/Parent College and Financial Aid Information Night at your High School
- Narrow down your college selections to three or four that interest you. Write or call each one to schedule a college visit.
- Carefully learn the meaning of deadline and postmark; you are not the only one applying for admission, housing or financial aid/scholarships. The earlier you act the better your chances.
- In order to be accepted to college you must first graduate from high school, and to do that, you must pass **ALL** of your classes!
- If you have not already done so, take the appropriate college admissions test ACT or SAT; registration materials are available in your counselor's office or you may register on-line [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) or [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).
- Update your resume and use it as a reference when filling out your applications. Make many copies of your resume.

# Focus on Your Future!

- Put together an awesome essay for use in applying for college and scholarships. Make many copies of this too!
- Apply for scholarships now! If you do not receive an offer right away, keep applying. Offers sometimes come late in the year.
- Make sure to visit with college representatives when they are on your campus.
- Many colleges require an interview. You may want to practice your interviewing skills with a teacher or counselor.

## **October–December**

- Attend the Centex College Fair on October 19, 2005 at a location to be determined.
- Continue to visit with college representatives. Keep all options open!
- Complete the Texas Common Application ([www.applytexas.org](http://www.applytexas.org)) Make copies of this too and add it to your college file. If you are planning on attending an out-of-state school complete their application or the common application for private schools.
- Ensure great recommendations!** Provide the person writing your letter of recommendation with the following information:
  - Make your request in writing and keep a copy.
  - Date submitted (allow at least two weeks for letter to be written)
  - Completed brag sheet (parent)
  - Completed brag sheet (student)
  - Resume
  - Copy of ACT and/or SAT scores
  - Copy of sixth-semester transcript (end of junior year)
  - At least one graded essay
  - Stamped, large 9½" X 12½" envelope addressed to each college admission office
  - Final date to mail to college

# Focus on Your Future!

## Senior (12th Grade) High School Planning Checklist Continued

- The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will be available in your counselor's office in December. This form cannot be submitted before January 1st. Apply early for financial aid; the early bird gets the money.

### January–April

- Send the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after January 1st. If mailed, it often takes six weeks or longer for processing. You may want to file on-line [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) as you will receive your results much faster. Remember that financial aid is distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. It is important to have this step done early.
- The mid-term college update will be mailed by your counselor as soon as your seventh semester transcript is available.
- You will be receiving offers for scholarships, grants and financial aid. Complete the graduation countdown form and return to your counselor. Your scholarship offers will be listed on the graduation program.
- If planning to attend a state-supported school in Texas, take the THEA. Registration forms are available in the counselors' office.
- Listen carefully to announcements for career opportunities, scholarship information, and dates of college representatives visits.
- Register to vote as soon as you turn 18. Voting is your privilege and your responsibility.
- Men must register for the draft at age 18. Completing the FAFSA form will automatically register men for the draft.
- Avoid Senioritis at all cost! Remember that second semester grades are important.

### May

- Fill out a written request in the Registrar's office to have your final transcript mailed to the college of your choice. There is a fee required.
- Send thank you notes to scholarship donors and all who wrote letters of recommendation for you.
- It's not too late!! If you have not completed the college admission process, you can still be admitted to some colleges.
- Continue to apply for scholarships until June 1st.