

The Next Steps to Higher Education

Tips for Freshmen & Sophomores

The best way to prepare for college now is to do your best academically and explore your interests in and out of the classroom. How can you do this?

Academics:

- Plan your high school courses wisely.** While fewer courses are needed for graduation, many colleges like to see 4 years English and Math, 3 years of Social Sciences and Sciences, and at least two years of a foreign language. Some schools also require a year of visual or performing arts.
- Challenge yourself.** Take the most rigorous course load that you, your parents and your Guidance Counselor think you can handle while still having time for outside interests.
- Explore.** Use your elective classes to explore your interests and potential careers.
- Work hard academically.** The higher your grades, the more college options will be open to you. Develop good study habits. Reach out for help when you don't understand the material.

Extracurricular, Work and Summer Activities:

- Join!** Get involved with extracurricular activities, volunteer programs, work or internships that you enjoy either at JHHS or in our community.
- Distinguish yourself.** In terms of activities, it is the quality not the quantity of activities that will be important. In your favorite activities, find a way to make a significant contribution. Take on an officer position. Develop a new program or activity. Encourage others to get involved. Get recognition or awards.
- Make summer plans.** Summer is a good time to get involved by volunteering, working, interning or attending a summer program. Many summer programs are listed in Naviance under "enrichment programs."
- Create your resume.** Keep track of your extracurricular, work and summer activities so you can report them to colleges later. Naviance has an easy resume writer.

Standardized Testing:

- Get ready for future standardized tests.** Review your past standardized test results with your Counselor or teacher to identify subjects you need to work on. This spring, do your best on standardized tests as a practice for junior year testing.
- Talk with the Assessment Center about your learning differences.** If you have an IEP or 504 Plan and currently receive accommodations, find out how to apply for accommodations on standardized tests.
- Investigate whether you should take AP or SAT subject tests.**

Career and College Research:

- Explore careers.** During classroom guidance you will be shown how to use Naviance to explore career interests.
- Participate in career treks and D214 Career Nights.**
- Explore different types of colleges.** Visit college campuses or attend District 214's College Fair in early April.

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Tips for Freshmen & Sophomore Parents

Academics:

- Ask your student about their future course selections. Urge them to take a college bound curriculum, at a demanding but sensible level of rigor and get good grades.
- Take an interest in what your student is studying and his/her homework.
- Foster good study habits: working in a quiet study area, goal setting, organization, prioritization, time management, review and adequate sleep.

Extracurricular, Work and Summer Activities:

- Encourage your student to get involved with extracurricular activities, volunteer programs, work or internships. This helps them adjust to high school and explore areas of interest, potentially discovering college majors or careers.
- Assist your student in finding meaningful things to do in the summer volunteering, a D214 internship, working, or attending a summer program. See Naviance for a list of “enrichment programs.”

Career:

- Attend D214 Career Nights in the fall with your student and urge him or her to attend JHHS Career Treks. Encourage your student to explore what they do well and enjoy.
- If your teen is undecided about a career direction, be patient. This is normal. Let him/her look into all the possibilities.
- Help your teen see the connection between college and career. Emphasize the importance of selecting a major that helps prepare him/her for a career.

College:

- Set the expectation that they will go to college, using phrases such as “When you go to college...”
- Take your student to visit a local college beginning sophomore year. See a football game, walk around campus or take a college tour.
- The goal sophomore year is to build excitement for going to college and an understanding of what the student values in a college. Encourage your student to assess: Do I feel comfortable on this campus? Why do I like or dislike this school? How does the size feel to me? Do I like the setting?

Financial Planning:

- Estimate the cost of college and your family’s Federal Aid eligibility by using the calculators at www.fafsa.ed.gov . The difference between the college cost and your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is the amount of Financial Aid you **may** be eligible for each year.
- Learn about the Financial Aid process, the types of Financial Aid and scholarships that may be available to your student.
- Have conversations with your son or daughter as they begin to develop a college list. What will your family be able to pay for college each year? Encourage them to develop a list that includes colleges that are financially feasible.