

College Prep Timeline: Grades 9th-12th

Preparing for College: A guideline for grades 9th-12th

Colleges consider many factors during the admissions process. Ultimately, they want to know if you have what it takes to successfully complete their academic requirements and if you will make a positive contribution to their campus. In order to assess your potential, colleges will gather specific information about you. They will review your grades, classes, test scores (SAT/ACT) and teacher recommendations to assess your academic ability. They will look at your extra curricular activities (sports, music, clubs, work, volunteer/ministry involvement, etc.) and recommendations to determine your character, leadership, interests and commitment. The timeline below offers suggestions for high school students at each grade level to help prepare them for the college application process.

Freshman Year

- Starting freshman year, all of your grades will be recorded on your high school transcript and will be calculated toward your high school grade point average (GPA). Colleges require a high school transcript as part of the application process. Your high school transcript will list all of your 9th-12th grade classes, grades and your cumulative GPA.
- Take challenging classes. Take honors courses when recommended during all four years. Make an appointment with your guidance counselor to discuss your course selection.
- Build relationships with your teachers and extracurricular/ministry leaders. There are countless benefits to building relationships with the adults the Lord has place in your life. It is also helpful to have teachers/leaders who know you well when it comes time for you to obtain recommendation letters.
- Turn off your TV and read! You will increase your vocabulary by choosing to read more. This will help you greatly with standardized tests and learning in general.
- Develop your talents and abilities. Be attentive in class and apply yourself to your schoolwork. You will reap the fruit of your labor! Also, get involved with activities at your school, church and in your community. Try sports, drama, artistic clubs/activities, etc. that interest you. You may discover unknown talent!
- Volunteer your time. Get involved with ministry opportunities at your church and in your community. Allow the Lord to use you and mold your gifts and desires as you serve Him. Discuss with your parents the possibility of volunteering at nursing homes, hospitals, soup kitchens, etc. Also, pray about getting involved in missions' trips with your youth group.
- Look into summer enrichment programs. Many colleges offer summer programs for high school students.
- Create a resume or keep a college admissions folder, in which you can collect a list of your activities including: volunteer work, athletics, honors and awards, employment, activities in and out of school and other accomplishments.

Sophomore Year

- Colleges look for students who not only do well in their classes, but who have chosen to take challenging classes and perform well. When considering your schedule for this year and the next two years, talk to your parents, teachers and guidance counselor about the option to take honors and AP courses. These courses are more difficult but don't let the fear of a lower GPA stop you. CCA (like many schools) has a weighted grading scale. Honors and AP Courses are weighted higher than other courses. Scoring well in an AP course demonstrates your ability to handle college-level material. Scoring well on the AP exam can earn you college credit. Also, consider taking more than the required two years of a language and be thoughtful about all of your elective choices.

- Your cumulative GPA is a very important factor in the college admissions process. Your grades this year will account for 1/3 of the cumulative GPA that will be displayed on your high school transcript when you send your transcript to colleges in the fall of your senior year. So, be diligent and do your best academically.
- Stay/get involved in school, church and community activities. Colleges look favorably on leadership positions and extracurricular involvement.
- All CCA Sophomores will take the PSAT/NMSQT this year. PSAT/NMSQT stands for Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. It's a standardized test that provides firsthand practice for the SAT Reasoning Test. Students who choose to take it again in their junior year are given the opportunity to enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) scholarship programs. The PSAT/NMSQT measures critical thinking ability, math problem-solving skills and writing skills.
- Take advantage of the resources available to you once you have taken the PSAT. The PSAT is a powerful step to college and career opportunity. Benefits of the PSAT/NMSQT:
 - Free SAT practice powered by Khan Academy - Students receive a unique SAT practice plan based on their performance on the PSAT/NMSQT that features: personalized online practice tailored to their strengths and weaknesses; SAT practice questions and full-length tests; detailed feedback on their progress. Visit khanacademy.org/sat to learn more.
 - Information About AP Potential - Students who take the PSAT/NMSQT receive free feedback on their aptitude for 20+ AP courses.
 - Access to College Planning Resources - Students' PSAT/NMSQT results will connect them to valuable resources that include: An interactive PSAT/NMSQT score report that includes detailed answer explanations to help them practice for the SAT; a detailed personality test to help students identify their interests and find majors and careers that are a good fit; tools allowing students to search for and explore colleges, majors, scholarships, and more.
 - Connect with Colleges - When your child takes the PSAT/NMSQT, he or she can say "Yes" to the Student Search Service. By participating, your child can receive free information about admission and financial aid from colleges, universities, and scholarship programs.
- Consider the SAT Subject Tests. Subject Tests measure your knowledge and skills in particular subject areas, and your ability to apply that knowledge. The SAT Subject Tests give you the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of content in specific subjects, such as English, History, Mathematics, Science, and various foreign languages. This test is not required by most schools for admissions, but many colleges view the Subject Tests as a bonus when making admission decisions and/or decisions about course placement. If a college does require SAT Subject Tests, some will specify the Subject Tests that they require for admission or placement; others allow applicants to choose which tests to take. You can take a subject test anytime during high school, but it is best to take it while the material is fresh in your mind. Go to www.collegeboard.com for a complete list of tests offered, and then compare that with your course schedule to determine the best time to take one.
- Think about how you will spend your summer. Look into job opportunities, internships, summer enrichment programs, missions' trips, etc.
- Keep you activity resume/college admissions folder up to date.

Junior Year

- Again, make sure you are doing your best academically. Most colleges will place great emphasis on your junior year classes and grades when they evaluate your transcript.
- Sign up to take the PSAT/NMSQT again this year. The test is not administered to all juniors at CCA (as it is sophomore year) but any junior can sign up to take the test at CCA when it is administered in October. As a junior taking the PSAT/NMSQT, you have the opportunity to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship and gain increased access to several other scholarships. It is also good practice for the SAT.
- Do your research. Utilize the guidance office, college websites and guide books to become more familiar with colleges, majors, financial aid and scholarships.
- Attend college fairs and campus view days. Every year CCA offers an optional junior class field trip to a Christian college fair in the fall. Sign up, and receive information from various Christian colleges in the U.S.
- Stay/get involved in school, church and community activities. Colleges look favorably on leadership positions and extracurricular involvement.
- Consider visiting colleges during your breaks and/or long weekends.
- Register to take the SAT Reasoning Test (www.collegeboard.com) or the ACT (www.ACT.org). These tests are offered at local schools several times throughout the school year. CCA offers the SAT twice during the school year, once in the fall and once in the spring. Visit the above websites (or talk to Mrs. Cardinal) for registration information including test dates, registration deadlines and test locations. You should definitely take at least one of these tests, at least once this year.
- Athletes may need to register for NCAA Clearinghouse. For more information, contact the high school athletic office.
- When making your course selection choices for next year, make sure you are set to complete all of CCA's graduation requirements (see Course Guide).
- Research scholarship opportunities. You will find that many scholarships are reserved for students who meet specific qualifications, such as academic, athletic or artistic talent. However, there are awards for students interested in certain fields of study, for those who are part of minority or under-represented groups and for those who display financial need. The majority of scholarship funds are awarded through colleges; however, there are hundreds of other organizations that award money. Ask your parents to check with their employers about possible company scholarship opportunities. Use scholarship books or free online search engines (such as the ones listed in the internet resource section).
- Keep you activity resume/college admissions folder up to date.
- Remember to make the most of your summer break. Plan to visit college campuses you are seriously considering.

Senior Year

- **Pray!** The Lord has created you with specific gifts and desires and He has unique plans for your life. In all of the busyness, do not forget to seek His wisdom and guidance in each of your decisions. (**Read Jeremiah 29:11**)
- Make a calendar of college application, scholarship application, test registration and financial aid deadlines.
- Decide on the teachers you will ask for letters of recommendation. Make sure you give them ample time to complete their letter for you. They have many other responsibilities as well as other students requesting letters.
- Consider taking the SAT or ACT again this fall to possibly improve your scores.
- Begin filling out on-line college applications. Ask your English teacher to review your admission essays before you submit them.
- Check out the Common Application. The Common Application is an undergraduate college admissions application that applicants may use to apply to any of the 1,000-member colleges and universities in the United States. Visit www.commonapp.org to see if the colleges to which you plan to apply are included in their member list.
- Complete, and submit to the Guidance Office, all transcript requests.
- In October, the FASFA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) becomes available. All students applying for any federal or state aid must fill out this form as soon as possible. Go to www.fafsa.ed.gov to complete the application. A FASFA application submitted online will be processed within 72 hours and students will receive the results 7 to 14 days faster than if they submit a paper FASFA.
- Keep your grades up! Many colleges require a mid-year report to check your senior year progress. Your college acceptance and/or scholarships may be contingent upon your senior year grades. Plus, you need to successfully complete all graduation requirements in order to receive a high school diploma.