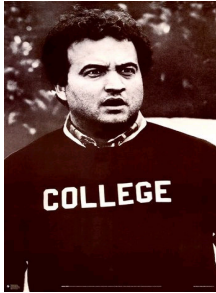


# COLLEGE IS COMING. ARE YOU READY?



## **START PLANNING EARLY.**

The key to getting into college and making the right college choices is charting a good course well in advance. Here are some crucial checkpoints along the way.

### 6th grade

- College is an investment in the future. If you haven't already, begin saving for your child's education. Get professional help for the means and methods available as well as how much to save. Remember, over the past 30 years, the cost of college has increased at *twice* the overall inflation rate.
- Enroll in mathematics and foreign language classes each year in middle and high school. Among the math courses needed are Algebra I & II and Geometry.
- Include college planning into family discussions. Look at college campuses while on vacation and visit some local schools so that your children get a feel for what college life is like; even attend a college sporting event. Check out college websites and take "virtual tours" of those that might interest your child. Don't be afraid to contact campuses via e-mail and ask specific questions.
- Attend college information days at school to gather information about admissions requirements and college life.
- Visit websites like [www.veritycollegeplanningcorporation.blogspot.com](http://www.veritycollegeplanningcorporation.blogspot.com) regularly to stay apprised of news in this area and to see the latest college planning tools available.

### 7th grade

- Consult with your child's school guidance counselor to determine which high school classes your child must take.
- Encourage your child to maintain good grades and foster good study habits.
- Spark a desire for a college education with your child; continue attending college information days.
- Get your child involved with something enjoyable such as a sport, music, art or drama or other extracurricular activities. These activities can develop skills that are attractive to colleges. Meaningful participation, leadership and a major commitment to a particular activity matter.

### 8th grade

- Arrange to take the PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test) in September in the eighth and ninth grades in preparation for the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test). Prepare for these tests using on-line (free) materials. Make sure that your child is comfortable with the format of the exam and is clear about how it works and how it is scored.
- Make searching and preparing for colleges a family affair. Parents should stay involved and help guide their child toward the best college options.

### 9th grade

- Become familiar with high school graduation requirements.
- Participate in school orientation to find out about activities available in high school.
- Work with your guidance counselor and develop a plan for creating a high school curriculum to meet all the necessary requirements, to challenge your child, and to prepare your child for college. At competitive colleges, taking harder courses means more than maintaining a straight “A” average.
- High school Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses are good preparation for university work and will give students an edge in college admissions and during college itself.
- Start reviewing college entrance requirements, but don’t settle for the minimums. For some fields of study or college majors, more is recommended or even required. Emphasize that getting in to the best colleges is a competitive process.
- Students should practice writing routinely throughout high school as it is essential for success in college and in life.
- Consider career choices. Pursue clubs, hobbies, internships and activities that relate to careers; counselors may have access to career aptitude tests.

### 10th grade

- Visit several college campuses and take guided tours. Ask guides and other students about their college experiences.
- Consider taking academic enrichment programs, summer classes offered by universities and workshops offered by campuses.
- Regularly access campus websites to learn more and request campus publications from colleges and universities that interest you.
- If taking Advanced Placement subjects, register to take AP exams in the spring. Scoring well will earn college-level credits.
- Consider using professional advisors (such as those at Verity College Planning) to make sure that you are on track for having good college choices available to you and that you will be able to afford those choices.

- **May:** Take AP exams for any AP subjects taken this year.

### 11th grade

- Check with your high school guidance counselor to make sure everything is on track to satisfy the college preparatory courses necessary for college admission.
- Maintain good grades, which are especially important during the junior year, and continue to foster good study skills.
- Attend college night programs at your school. Ask questions of campus representatives.
- Visit college campuses that you are interested in. Call ahead for campus tours and presentations about academic programs, admissions requirements and financial aid. Bring student transcripts and a well thought-out set of questions about the school and student life there.
- Register in October for the PSAT, which is required for several national scholarship programs, including National Merit, National Achievement and National Hispanic Scholarships. The results will also help you identify your strengths and weaknesses.
- If taking Advanced Placement subjects, register to take AP exams in the spring. Scoring well will earn college-level credits.
- Have an expert (such as those available through Verity College Planning) evaluate writing skills and offer information about strengths and weaknesses.
- Decide when and how often to take the SAT and/or ACT. Taking either test in the spring will allow time to receive the results and meet with a counselors and experts to determine whether to retake the test in the fall. Register for exams one month in advance of the test date.
- Prepare for the SAT or ACT by using books and manuals with test-taking tips and sample questions. These can be found in bookstores, libraries, schools, on-line and on CD-ROMs. Attend workshops on how to prepare for these exams. Financial aid may be available for some workshops and for the test fee. Consider using professional test preparation experts and services.
- Stay involved with extracurricular activities, including volunteer work. Colleges appreciate well-rounded students.
- Review class schedules with your high school guidance counselor to ensure college preparatory requirements are being satisfied.
- **May:** Take AP exams for any AP subjects taken this year.

### 12th grade

- View the senior year as a time to prepare for the first year of college. Schedules should include honors and AP courses that will strengthen overall preparation.
- Frequently check with your high school counselor or career center director for scholarships awarded by colleges and universities, local companies and

- community groups. Search for this information at public libraries and on the internet.
- **November 30:** UC and CSU applications filing deadline enrollment in the fall. Make sure you are aware of all applicable deadlines at other schools that interest you.
  - **January:** Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which provides financial aid opportunities and eligibility information and can calculate an estimated financial aid package. Then complete all other applicable college financial aid forms.
  - **March and April:** If required, take the English Placement Test and Entry Level Math exam at a CSU campus. A passing score on the tests is required for placement into the first college-level course in English and mathematics.
  - **May:** Take AP exams for any AP subjects taken this year.
  - **Summer:** Participate in any orientation programs for incoming freshmen. Talk to an academic adviser on campus.
  - Not ready for a four-year college? Consider attending a community college. They provide a quality education and are an available route for transferring to a four-year school.

### **Extracurricular activities**

**Most Impressive:** School newspaper, student government, choir or orchestra, varsity sports, community service, Eagle Scout, All-state anything, founder of your own business, volunteer firefighter or paramedic.

Colleges see hundreds of similar applications. If you have something that sets yourself apart, your admissions chances will be enhanced. Admissions officers are always on the lookout for “resume-padding” and want to see commitment and passion to a few things over and above lots of activity for its own sake.

## On the Web

For more information on preparing and getting into college, check out these Web sites:

- [www.veritycollegeplanningcorporation.blogspot.com](http://www.veritycollegeplanningcorporation.blogspot.com) and [veritycollegeplanning.com](http://veritycollegeplanning.com) offer parents and students helpful advice and crucial information for navigating the process of college planning.
- [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) offers key information and tools for preparing for college.
- [www.review.com](http://www.review.com) provides a guide to colleges, applications and admissions secrets.