

Countdown to Graduation

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Overcome the fact that the teen brain is not prone to planning.

Use this guide to break down the post-secondary planning process so it is not overwhelming.

Your child's school counselor is your expert guide.

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

- * The transition from high school to post-secondary life is the biggest your child has faced thus far.
- * Resistance usually occurs when a student is feeling overwhelmed or is not ready to face important decisions.
 - > Listen for clues to identify your child's level of readiness.
- * Sit down with your student, using your checklist to set expectations, to plan, and to accomplish tasks.
- * Attend parent information nights to stay connected to "the process".
- * Enlist the help of your child's school counselor.

4 years to go...9th grade

- ❖ Understand graduation requirements (found on the PWCS website, course catalog, or on your school's counseling page).
 - Advanced diploma allows for the student to meet college entrance course requirements.
 - Standard diploma allows flexibility for specialty programs (Cosmetology, Practical Nursing), dual enrollment at NOVA, or for students to go to work and take care of family needs.
- ❖ Take challenging courses (course rigor); balance school & home activities.
- ❖ Students should get involved in school and community activities. Focus on leadership and service. Link extracurricular activities to a passion.
Activities should be unique, with high impact.

4 years to go...9th grade

Use FAMILY CONNECTION!

*Every 9th grader is introduced to **Family Connection**, an online college research and career exploration tool. (PWCS provides a free account for each student.)

- ❖ Self exploration tools (find a career match!):
 - * Personality Type assessment (**Do What You Are**)
 - * Strengths Explorer
 - * Learning styles inventory

- ❖ Research majors and colleges based on assessment:
 - * **Supermatch** college search

- ❖ Build a **resume** of activities and awards using template.

- ❖ Set **goals/journal** activities.

3 years to go...10th grade

- ❖ Maintain **good grades** in **challenging courses**.
- ❖ Look for **leadership** opportunities and continue volunteering.
*Search "Enrichment Opportunities" on Family Connection.
- ❖ Update **resume** on Family Connection and share activities with your school counselor.
- ❖ Begin a list of possible schools, using "**Colleges I'm Thinking About**" on Family Connection. This feature allows students to view deadlines, scattergram charts, and to be invited to in-school college visits.
- ❖ Understand college entrance requirements for intended schools.
Example: math or science requirements vary per school and intended major.

3 years to go...10th grade

- ❖ Take the **PSAT** in October:
 - *Focus on the personalized feedback on skills. Do not focus on score.
- ❖ Use College Board's student-specific **SAT study plan** (Khan Academy):
 - * Includes personalized skills feedback (practice questions organized by skill.).
 - *Students use the access code on their score report to access the program
- ❖ SAT is more popular in this region but colleges accept both SAT and ACT. Some VA schools are now score-report optional, noting a GPA threshold or extra recommendations.
- ❖ SAT is a 1600 max score for 2 sections (Reading/Writing Language & Math, 800 max score each); essay will be optional; no penalty for incorrect multiple choice responses;
 - *See PWCS Student Services website, "College & Career Planning" for details.
- ❖ Take the practice questions for ACT test (called PLAN) if interested.

3 years to go...10th grade

- ❖ Use the AP Potential report (based on PSAT results) and teacher recommendations to guide selection of 11th grade courses. Counselors assist with course planning to meet student goals.
- ❖ If a student is interested in applying to a PWCS specialty program in order to earn an industry certification for workplace readiness, s/he should note that deadlines range from February 1 through March.
**Information for the various specialty programs can be found on the PWCS website*
- ❖ Governor's School @ Innovation Park application is due the first week of February (many components are required- see GS@IP site for info).

2 years to go...11th grade

- ❖ "Context of curriculum" is a focus for college admissions.
- ❖ Balance is key- maintain good grades and extracurricular activities (research Enrichment programs on Family Connection).
- ❖ Narrow list of schools to 5-7. Visit colleges.
- ❖ Attend college fairs and in-school college visits.
- ❖ Student athletes should register for the NCAA Eligibility Center.
- ❖ Students interested in service academy appointments should start the process in spring (meet with counselor).
- ❖ Think about teacher recommendations for applications.
- ❖ If interested in NOVA dual enrollment, take placement tests and meet with counselor.
- ❖ Take SAT I and/or ACT in Spring. Take SAT II subject tests if needed.
- ❖ During summer: review college applications and possible essays. Think about application deadlines. Early? Priority (scholarship)? Regular?
- ❖ Set up organization system (spreadsheet, files) to manage college applications.
- ❖ Get ready because senior year is busy!

REFLECT & REFRESH

Find your happy place



1 year to go...12th grade

- ❖ Determine if senior should take tests in the fall. SAT I and/or II? ACT?
- ❖ Review intended college applications, write & rewrite/edit essays, secure recommendations early.
- ❖ Determine deadlines- Early? Priority (scholarship)? Regular?
- ❖ Attend senior conference with counselor to review goals, clarify questions, & understand Family Connection transcript-request process.
- ❖ Apply for scholarships (use Family Connection to research).
- ❖ Parents attend Senior Parent Night & Financial Aid Night.
- ❖ After October 1, apply for FAFSA (attend Super Saturday).
- ❖ Maintain grades- GPA & rank are recalculated mid-year.
- ❖ Students attending NOVA should apply, meeting priority deadlines, and tour the campus (understand "Guaranteed Admissions" to transfer and pursue a bachelor's degree.) Placement tests are required.
- ❖ Study for spring tests (AP, IB, AICA). Note intended school's crediting policy for these scores (released in July).
- ❖ Select college/university and identify it in your Family Connection account so final transcript will be sent. Pay your deposit to secure spot.



GRADUATION

