

# College Planning for 9th Graders and their Families

*by Stacy Holguin*

It seems the college planning process keeps getting earlier and earlier. While it is important to think about college financing when your children are little, there is not much else to focus on until your child is heading for 9th grade. This checklist for rising 9th graders can be helpful.

1. Grades for core courses such as math and English may count toward college starting in 9th grade, so make sure you have both math and English on your 9th grade schedule and that you do your best in these courses. The rest of your grades will be calculated into your college GPA in your 10th grade year.
2. Meet with your school counselor to make sure you are in the highest level of course your performance will allow. This is called pursuing rigorous courses. If your school has English 9 and English 9 Honors, and you and your teachers feel you are ready for English 9 Honors, take the honors course. Make sure your schedule is balanced and not overwhelming.
3. Participate in extracurricular activities outside of the classroom. Examples of extracurricular activities include clubs, sports, music, scouts, choir, cheerleading, drama, or a volunteer activity. If you love video games, join the e-sports team at school rather than staying home. 9th grade is the perfect time to try several activities and dive into a couple you like the most over the following years. Colleges would rather see growing involvement in one or two activities than scattered attendance at lots of different things.
4. Plan for and take the PSAT. Even in this era of test-optional admissions, the PSAT is still important because it helps students qualify for merit scholarship opportunities and notifies colleges of your interest in higher education.
5. Use your summer wisely. Look for a job, internship, or volunteer activity that helps you learn about different fields of interest. It doesn't have to be your whole summer, but a planned experience each summer will give you exposure that will help you make decisions about colleges, majors, and jobs in your future.
6. Save for college. If you can have an opportunity for paid work, save some of your earnings for college expenses. You will thank yourself later!
7. Most of all, keep your grades up and enjoy exploring the world around you. High school is an experience unto itself where you can take the time to learn and grow before worrying too much about college.

Presidio Group Education Planning can help guide you through the early grades of high school, so you are ready to start researching and selecting colleges in your junior year.