

What should underclassmen be doing to prepare for college?

Although college seems far away to most high school underclassmen and their parents, the entire high school record counts for college admissions. Any earlier accomplishments or difficulties are cleared away and students are given a fresh start in high school. They have three years to accumulate the academic and co-curricular credentials on which colleges will base their admission decisions.

Although colleges like to see students who are involved in their school and community, the first thing that an admissions officer is going to look at is the student's transcript. How strong of a curriculum does the student have? What grades has the student earned? Has the student challenged himself? More often than not, the student must first meet the academic qualifications of the school before extra-curricular involvement is even considered.

Therefore, encourage your son or daughter to do well academically even as early as the freshman year of high school. Unfortunately, a lot of students don't understand that even their freshman year grades factor into their overall cumulative GPA the same amount as their sophomore and junior year grades do. Instead, many students think they can wait until junior or senior year to start doing well in high school. As a result, it's critical for parents to encourage their children to challenge themselves academically while performing to the best of their abilities.

After emphasizing academics, consider extra-curricular involvements. There are no formulas or exact amounts of involvement that do or don't work when it comes to college admissions. Parents should encourage their children to get involved in activities that they enjoy. Colleges review involvement to gain a sense of students' passions, interpersonal skills, leadership abilities, and interests. They do not seek only the students with lengthy resumes or impressive accomplishments; they want to admit students who will be involved on their campuses and will contribute to their communities in positive ways.

Sophomore Year:

- Continue working towards good grades
- Add rigor to class schedule
- Take the PLAN and PSAT tests
- Buy an SAT/ACT book and start doing practice tests once a month
- Track academics and community service
- Continue working on Community Service
- Peruse college websites

Freshman Year:

- Focus on core classes and getting good grades
- Get involved in clubs and sports
- Start working on Community Service