



FRESHMAN

Student needs:

- Discussion of career goals and the academic requirements for college

School supports:

- Teach students what a course sequence is and how honors and Advanced Placement courses differ from regular courses.
- Teach students how to calculate their grade point averages, both overall and for classes specific to a major like science.
- Help students understand the difference between the grades required to be accepted into a college and the grades needed to get a scholarship or enter a particular major.

EducationWeek®

Steps to Keep College-Bound Students on Track

Many low-income, high-achieving students miss out on college opportunities because they underestimate the admissions process. Now, as these students endure a hard economic and social hit from the pandemic, experts say schools need to provide a clear structure and supports to help the Class of 2021 and beyond stay on track with their postsecondary plans.

The following timeline, drawn from discussions with college admissions and high school guidance experts, highlights some ways schools can schedule the support students need most to plan for and transition after graduation—and continue to provide that assistance in the face of pandemic-related disruptions and uncertainties.



SOPHOMORE

Student needs:

- Honing skills for college

School supports:

- Ask students to begin tracking their activities, jobs, and volunteer experiences to build a portfolio to draw on for applications.
- Use advisories or other classes to help students learn study skills and help-seeking options, such as understanding educators' office hours.
- Support students' financial literacy, particularly in calculating costs and fees and understanding loan terms.

JUNIOR



Student needs:

- Admissions testing and college research

School supports:

- Review grades with students with an eye to their postsecondary plans and provide opportunities to recover credit if needed.
- Provide school-based admissions test prep and if possible, on-campus testing or transportation to the test.
- Recommend students gather income information from parents during tax season in the year before they apply.
- Colleges release essay questions for the following year's applications in spring. Teachers can use these to give students essay practice and time to think through the story they want to tell admissions committees.



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SENIOR

Fall

Student needs:

- Complete basic application and financial aid information

School supports:

Applications:

- Experts advise low-income students to aim to apply to colleges by November 1 to join the round of early acceptances, when colleges have the most financial aid money available.
- Provide a time and structure for seniors to have regular help.
- Stream and videotape advisory sessions for students who have work hours that make it difficult to attend live.

Financial aid:

- Provide access to guidance, both in-person and online, for students and families to fill out federal and state financial aid forms.

College visits:

- Colleges make their big recruiting push in September and October, and this year, admissions officers said they are working to hold virtual meetings with rural schools and others that they may not normally visit in person. High schools can help students by reaching out to colleges to invite a virtual college visit.

Spring

Student needs:

- Choosing a school



School supports:

Completing Admissions:

- Advisories and text apps can help schools remind students to follow through on admissions requirements after they have been accepted.
- Make students aware of the differing checklists colleges and universities have of enrollment requirements.

Comparing Schools:

- Students and families often need help understanding admissions packages to compare them. Schools can help via virtual and live mentors, but also by providing glossaries of loan terms and outlines to help students compare and contrast packages.

Financial aid:

- Help students identify the tax, health, and other records information they will need to verify their financial aid requests. For example, some low-income students need an IRS letter confirming their parents did not earn enough to pay taxes in the previous year.

After Graduation



Student Needs:

- Preparing for the transition to college; settling on campus

School supports:

- Continue mentoring after acceptance to help students calculate costs beyond their tuition like travel or housing. Scholarships often may not cover these.
- Use recent graduates to inform upcoming students and keep the freshman students connected during their first year of college. For example, Meg Scheid, college counselor and director of alumni relations of the Gwinnett School of Science, Mathematics, and Technology in Georgia invites graduates to participate in a speaker series for younger students.
- Keep access to transcripts and portfolio information for students who delay entry to college by a semester or year because of the pandemic.