

Preparing for College Tips for 9th Graders and their Families

Focus:

During the 9th and 10th grades, students work to develop strong study skills, a sense of independence and a sense of identity. While they progress through the core academic classes, they work at higher and higher cognitive levels and expand their capacities as thinking and questioning individuals. As they sample electives, they begin to expand their sense of who they are and where their interests lie. College is not an immediate vision, but as they become stronger students, they are laying the foundations for their future academic paths.

Beginning in the 9th grade, letter grades and activities are recorded and appear on student transcripts. Students have independent free periods, during which they can study on their own, while seeking help from their teachers when they need it. Students continue taking courses in the arts and are encouraged to participate in community service activities and competitive athletics.

Students should begin to explore some of their extracurricular interests – at Burroughs and/or outside of school. Colleges want students, as they move through the high school years, to “do what they love” and to show depth and commitment (even if only in one or two areas). By exploring some of those interests now, they are able to decide where their commitment, talent and passions lie.

Increasingly, they consider and are advised on course selection as it may impact their college prospects. In conjunction with their teachers, they should plan for coursework as is appropriate.

Often families ask if it is better to “stretch” by taking a more rigorous course and making a lower grade...our advice: take the coursework that is appropriate and where you will shine.

Students who take Biology Accelerated in 9th grade are encouraged to take the SAT Biology exam in June.

Tips for Students:

- **Work Hard in School:** Your parents have probably mentioned the importance of good grades. They may be clueless on some things, but they are right about this! 9th grade is the first year that your grades are on the transcript that colleges will see when you apply.

- **Find a Few Activities:** What you do with your discretionary time (outside class) is important. Think about what you like best. Are there some you like more than others? Something new you'd like to try? It's better to do one or two things well than to spread yourself too thin. And now is the time to explore.
- **Have Fun:** Everyone needs a balance between work and play. You may actually do better in school if you don't let yourself get too stressed out. By the way, getting a good night's sleep is also a great idea!

Great quote from a student: "I wish I had tried harder on freshman and sophomore year academics. I wish I had understood that my performance was important. I was immature and regret the decisions I made."

Tips for Parents:

- **Control Your Anxiety:** Remember, as you are thinking about college, your son or daughter is still adjusting to high school. Be gentle. And while your son or daughter may not get into your favorite college, keep in mind that there are a lot more great schools today than there were thirty years ago.
- **Assess Your Finances:** Now is a great time to begin thinking about what you will be able to afford.
- **Help Your Son or Daughter Think about Summer Activities:** Options may include volunteering, shadowing a professional or even some out-of-town experiences. Attend the Summer Opportunities Fair with them.
- **Understand That It's Not About You:** Work to stay tuned to your student; what they are saying and what they aren't. Try to keep the college process as "low key" as possible.

Great quote from a mom: "It took me a while to figure out that some schools are looking for students and some have more than they need."