

- **Junior Year**

Junior Presentation

Junior year is an exciting time when students begin to feel more independent. Coincidentally, there is also an increased level of academic and personal responsibility that can sometimes be overwhelming for them. This is a time when students begin to feel pressured about knowing the answers to big questions like, "So what do you want to do after high school?" For some students, the junior year is a time filled with excitement about the future, but for others it can become unnecessarily stressful. Parents can be supportive through the college or post-secondary planning process by encouraging students to take the lead in planning their future. Spend time with your child using the tools in the Naviance Family Connection to help make the process more focused and less stressful. Naviance has information on more than 800 careers and also includes information about education and training, average wages by state, and possible college majors. Below are some tools available to help guide and inform the process.

PSAT

Juniors are encouraged to take the PSAT/NMSQT in October. The PSAT mimics the test content and format of the SAT and is designed to give an approximation of how the student will perform when he/she takes the SAT in the spring of the junior year. The PSAT also serves as the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test for juniors. Many corporations and foundations use the PSAT to administer scholarships to high-achieving students. The PSAT is designed just like the SAT with two exceptions: there is no essay section in the PSAT and the total number of test sections is fewer. The PSAT is an excellent opportunity for students to explore what test conditions for the SAT are like.

My College Quickstart

One benefit of taking the PSAT is student access to College Board's online SAT preparation tool, *My College Quickstart*. Using this tool students are able to view and sort their PSAT results, access practice questions in targeted areas of weakness, take a full length official practice SAT, and sign up to receive an official SAT Question of the Day through e-mail. My College Quickstart is one of the best SAT preparation tools a student can use. Each student receives a customized SAT study plan based on his/her individual results. With focus and commitment, students are able to use this feedback to increase their scores and their chances of being admitted to their top choice schools.

The College Search

Students should use their junior year to explore colleges, technical/trade schools, and other post-secondary options. PSAT scores, GPA, and class rank, calculated at the end of the fifth semester, are three important pieces of information students can use to inform their college search. Students should use the college search tools available to them in Naviance to explore schools where their estimated SAT scores and GPA place them within the academic profile of the colleges they are considering.

While academic fit is a key component in the college search process, students should also be considering a variety of lifestyle and learning style factors:

- Do I want to be able to visit home or friends on weekends, or would I be happy at a more distant school where I may only come home once or twice per year?
- Would I gain more from a smaller and more personalized learning community or I am interested in a large university that may offer more options?
- Are there extracurricular activities or academic programs that are so important to me that I would not enjoy my college experience without them?

These and other questions should be considered when working to shape a student's initial college list. The primary goal of the initial college search should be to develop a list of ten to fifteen colleges that are a good academic and social fit for the student. This is a process that should continue throughout the spring of the junior year. College search is a game of match-making. Working with his/her school counselor, each student will work toward identifying an initial list of schools that are most likely to complement his/her affection for knowledge, academic skills, and career orientation.

College Visits

While Naviance is a comprehensive post-secondary planning tool with several college search options, nothing can replace an actual campus visit. Juniors are allowed two excused absences for college visits. Fall and spring are the ideal times to see a campus because admissions offices are busy hosting open houses, tours, and information sessions. If possible, it is always a good idea to register in advance for a tour and an information session. The tours are generally given by current students, but the information session is always hosted by an admissions counselor who can answer any questions that students and families have about the admissions process. Dates and times of tours and information sessions can be found on each college's Admissions webpage.

Standardized Testing Timeline

After juniors have reviewed their PSAT scores and completed an initial college search, it

is time to put together a standardized testing schedule that includes some test preparation. Students should always review the standardized testing requirements of each school to which they are planning to apply and develop a testing schedule which will allow them to meet all of the admissions requirements in time for the application deadline. Most students will take the SAT Reasoning Test twice in high school, once in the spring of the junior year and once in the fall of the senior year. Some selective colleges and universities may also require SAT Subject Tests, which must also be factored into the testing timeline.

The ACT is another standardized test accepted by all colleges and universities. Unlike the SAT, the ACT is an achievement test that does not measure a student's reasoning skills. If a student does decide to take the ACT, it is highly recommended that he/she take it with the optional writing test.

Test Preparation

It is always a good idea for students to complete some level of standardized test preparation before taking the SAT or the ACT. Test prep options vary from free online resources to private SAT tutoring. As mentioned above, students are encouraged to review their most recent PSAT scores and use the results to construct a plan that will help them overcome their weaknesses.

The DHS School Counseling Department works with students in groups and individually to assist them with the college planning process, beginning in late winter of the junior year.

College Board Fee Waiver Program

The College Board provides fee waivers for eligible students to cover the cost of taking the SAT and some college application fees. The fee waiver program also provides a reduction in AP Exam fees. Students should see their school counselor to determine eligibility for this program.
