

# FRESHMAN YEAR

- VERY IMPORTANT! Begin maintaining a folder or filing box to store any certificates, pictures, letters, awards, newspaper clippings, medals, etc. that demonstrate academic, leadership, community service, and/or athletic accolades or accomplishments. This documentation will be invaluable when you begin the college and scholarship applications in a few years.
- GRADES COUNT. From the first day you step into the classroom in the beginning of ninth grade throughout the rest of your high-school and college education, grades count! Every single semester grade you earn will go on your high-school transcript as a permanent record of your grades.
- While a good GPA is important for admissions and scholarships, it may be secondary to your ACT or SAT score and rigor of curriculum (Honors, Advanced Placement, Distance Learning, Career Tech, and Dual Enrollment courses). Do not be tempted to take "easier" classes to have a higher GPA. Remember, most colleges would prefer to have a student with a low A or B in a challenging course than an easy A in a simpler course. Plus, these challenging courses often help students increase their ACT and SAT scores, which most often determines scholarships and admissions.
- READ! Reading will help increase your vocabulary, your knowledge, your grades, your test scores, and your college and career success!
- WRITE! Learning to write well in high school will also help to prepare you for college-entrance exams; college essays; and for all the writing you will be required to do in college and in your career!
- This is the time to really use your standardized test results (ACT, SAT, ASPIRE, and/or EXPLORE) for remediation in your areas of weakness. Ask your teachers for help; attend all after-school tutoring sessions or test-preparation seminars; and if necessary, ask your parents to find a tutor for you. Taking responsibility NOW for improving your skills will help you to perform better on all other standardized assessments.
- It is important to develop good study habits by putting forth much effort in your classes and in your studies. If you need help with time-management and study skills, please ask your counselor and teachers to help you.
- It is also important in the ninth grade to really know your interests and your personality in order to [research careers](#). It is important now to develop your career goal and to create a four-year plan that relates to your career goal. You will need to know the education required for your career and to make sure you are taking the courses in high school that are required for admission and for your program-of-study at your chosen college.
- Now is also the time to [research colleges](#). Look at colleges' admission requirements; scholarship-eligibility criteria; financial aid; cost of attendance; size; location; campus life; etc. Be informed! Know what you need to do to be admitted and to earn a scholarship from colleges.
- Attend the National College Fair sponsored by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). This Fair is always held on a Sunday afternoon in September at the Birmingham/Jefferson Civic Center. Go to [\\*\\*www.gotomyncf.com\\*\\*](http://www.gotomyncf.com) to register. See your counselor for further information.
- Ninth grade is also a good time to start planning your [college visits](#). Whenever you can, try to visit colleges so you can find the college that best suits you.
- Be sure to ask your parents/guardians to schedule a time for you and for them to meet with your school counselor. Your counselor will assist you with determining your strengths; weaknesses; interests; personality; and goals. Your counselor will help you use your assessment results and all other academic, career, and personal/social information to help you create your high-school four-year plan and to assist you in your post-secondary planning.
- Be sure to discuss your career ideas with your counselor, your teachers, your parents and with recent college graduates so they can help you better prepare for your chosen career and so that you will be a better informed student.
- Visit the high-school Counseling Office where you will find books, DVDs, and other college and career resources that will be helpful in your college and career search.
- It is important to get involved in your school. If possible, join one of the many school clubs offered at your school and participate in the volunteer activities in which these clubs are involved.
- Your volunteer service is also a very important factor for college admission and for scholarship organizations. Colleges, scholarship committees and prospective employers want to see that you have a committed involvement in one or two service organizations and that you are doing your part in making your community a better place in which to live. Ask your teachers about all the clubs in which you have interest in joining.
- You can also spend time volunteering with organizations outside of school in a career field that you are interested in pursuing. Talk with your parents, your counselor and your teachers for more information on these organizations.
- Keep a record of all your volunteer activities because these will be included on your resume that you will be completing in the eleventh grade.
- If you are a student athlete and want to participate in college athletics, it is your responsibility to know the requirements for eligibility. You will find information on NCAA, NAIA, and NJCAA in this handbook. Be sure you read this information carefully. The most important thing for you to do in the ninth grade is to keep your GPA up and to score as high as possible on the ACT or SAT.
- Finally, it is important to know that your counselor is here to assist you with any academic, career and personal/social issues. Please talk with your counselor if you have any of these concerns!