

# Helping Your Student Succeed in High School and Beyond

# Ayudando a Su Estudiante a Tener Éxito en la Preparatoria y Más Allá

LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

SENTANDO LAS BASES PARA LA PREPARACIÓN UNIVERSITARIA  
Y DE CARRERA



Helpful Information for Parents of  
High School Students

Ayuda Útil Para los Padres de  
Estudiantes de Preparatoria



# About This Guide

This guide was designed by the Alliance for College Readiness, a partnership between Elgin Community College and Community Unit Districts 300, 301, 303, and U-46. Our goal is to improve all students' academic success, increase the college-going rate, and improve students' college and career readiness. We hope this guide will help you begin planning, right now, for your student's success after high school.

## How to Prepare Your Tenth-Grade Student for the rest of High School and Beyond

### **ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENT TO TAKE MORE THAN THE “MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS” NEEDED TO GRADUATE.**

Many students graduate from high school and enroll in college only to learn they are not academically ready for college-level work. Taking rigorous high school courses will help your student prepare for college and careers.

- Talk to a counselor about courses that will increase college and career readiness including foreign language and other elective courses.
- Additional math and science courses are almost always helpful. And any course that improves reading and writing will reinforce important skills.





## **PAY ATTENTION TO PLAN TEST AND KNOW WHAT YOUR STUDENT'S PLAN SCORES MEAN.**

The PLAN test is the second of three tests (EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT) that help students prepare for college.

- Mark PLAN test dates on a family calendar.
- Make sure your student eats well and gets enough sleep before the test.
- Discuss the importance of the test with your student, and encourage her or him to take the test seriously.
- When you receive the test scores, talk with a counselor and your student to determine the best next steps.

## **HELP YOUR STUDENT LEARN TO BE MORE ORGANIZED.**

Organization is a key to success. It includes time management and setting priorities.

- Model responsible planning by posting a family schedule and to-do list.
- Talk with your student about making a personal to-do list.
- Maintain family routines (normal sleeping and waking times, meal times, and homework times) that support successful students.
- Encourage your student to develop routines for organizing assignments and school materials.

## ASK YOUR STUDENT ABOUT RESOURCES FOR EXPLORING CAREER OPTIONS.

High school is a good time for your student to begin exploring what type of careers might suit her or his interests and strengths.

- Encourage your student to check out Career Cruising to explore careers and plan for education: [careercruising.com](http://careercruising.com).
- Explore with your student opportunities for summer job shadowing to explore careers that might interest her or him.



## HELP YOUR STUDENT EXPLORE POST-HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES.

These decisions are too important to leave for the last minute.

- Discuss opportunities at public, private, four-year, and two-year colleges.
- Find out where and what older students and other role models are studying.
- Look into specialized schools for electricians, auto mechanics, health service providers, hairdressers, computer-game designers, and similar fields.
- Encourage your student to visit college websites.
- Encourage your student to meet with college representatives when they visit the high school.
- Discuss college visit opportunities with your student and the high school counselor.

## HELP YOUR STUDENT PLAN FOR COLLEGE EXPENSES.

Not only is it practical to start early, but building a plan and saving money is a sign of commitment.

- Help your student create an account at [fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com), where she or he can create a profile and find scholarships suited to her or his abilities and interests.
- Suggest that your student talk to a high school counselor about local scholarship opportunities.
- Encourage your student to save toward college or career training.

# HOW TO PREPARE YOUR ELEVENTH-GRADE STUDENT FOR THE REST OF HIGH SCHOOL AND BEYOND

## ENCOURAGE AND EXPECT YOUR STUDENT TO TAKE FOUR YEARS OF MATH.

Many students are not ready for college math classes. A 2008 study at Elgin Community College showed that approximately 71 percent of high school graduates who placed into college-level math at ECC had taken a math course during their senior year of high school.

- Talk with your student about the importance of enrolling in math during her or his senior year.
- Encourage your student to enroll in the highest course for which she or he qualifies.

## UNDERSTAND AND HELP YOUR STUDENT PREPARE FOR THE 11TH-GRADE PRAIRIE STATE (PSAE) TEST.

The PSAE test that students take in the spring of their junior year includes the ACT, which is used by many colleges to determine college acceptance and college course placement. Good scores on the ACT may help students qualify for academic scholarships.

- Encourage your student to prepare for the test using online resources and review sessions. Free practice questions are available at [act.org](http://act.org) and [whatsnextillinois.org](http://whatsnextillinois.org).
- Make sure your student gets a good night's sleep and eats well before the test.
- When the test scores come back, review the scores with your student.
- Ask for help from a high school counselor to understand the scores and how they may affect your student's options.



## ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENT TO ATTEND THE COLLEGE FAIR AT ELGIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

Held the first week of October, the college fair brings representatives from colleges and universities from across the country together to share information about their schools with potential students.

- Go with your student to the presentations at College Night; they'll help you develop questions to ask each college's representative.
- Allow your student to roam the college exhibits and explore the variety of opportunities.
- Take home handouts from colleges and give your student a chance to dream.

## HELP YOUR STUDENT FIND OUT ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES TO EARN COLLEGE CREDIT DURING HIGH SCHOOL.

Not only can this lead to saving money in college, but it can increase your student's confidence and help them explore a possible field of interest.

- Ask your student about advanced placement courses, dual-credit courses, and articulated credit through career technical programs.
- Suggest that your student talk with a counselor about these opportunities to earn college credit early.

## VISIT COLLEGES WITH YOUR STUDENT.

Visiting colleges can help students find the best "fit" for them.

- Your students should start by visiting college websites.
- Once your student has identified colleges of interest, she or he should plan to visit as many as possible. Consider partnering with another family to take trips.
- Encourage your student to call the admissions office and learn schedules for open houses or campus tours at colleges of interest.



# How to Prepare Your Twelfth-Grade Student for the Rest of High School and Beyond

## **ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENT TO CONTINUE EXPLORING WHAT SHE OR HE MIGHT LIKE TO STUDY OR DO AFTER HIGH SCHOOL.**

Your student's college and career interests have probably changed or grown more specific in the last few years.

- Talk with your student about career opportunities and college majors related to various careers.
- Even if you don't know all the answers, encourage your student to discuss her or his ideas and questions with you. You can research the answers together.

## **UNDERSTAND THE DEADLINES FOR APPLYING TO COLLEGE AND REGISTERING FOR CLASSES.**

These deadlines are set long in advance, and you can't miss them.

- Help your student create a schedule and task list to start the application process early in the fall of her or his senior year.
- Note different applications dates for different types of schools.
  - Encourage application at selective colleges (with earlier application dates).
  - Remember that four-year school deadlines are earlier than two-year school deadlines.
- Remind your student that even at a community or technical college, classes fill quickly, so waiting until the last minute is not a good idea.

## INCLUDE FINANCIAL AID DEADLINES IN YOUR STUDENT'S PLANNING.

Meeting these deadlines will make sure your student qualifies for the most financial support.

- Add financial aid deadlines to your family's to-do list. Talk with your student about making a personal to-do list.
- Complete the Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) in January. You can find more information at [fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov). You also can talk with your high school guidance counselor or a person in the financial aid office of the college your student plans to attend.
- Make a list of deadlines for local, private scholarship opportunities and deadlines for scholarships at the schools to which your student is applying.

## ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENT TO STAY FOCUSED DURING SENIOR YEAR.

Don't let a last-minute loss of focus put so many years of schoolwork at risk.

- Continue to monitor your student's grades and attendance.
- Talk about school work and projects with your student.
- Ask your student how she or he feels about finishing high school.



# How to Help Your Student Through the First Year of College

## LEARN AND TALK ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE.

Your student will be navigating in a new world.

- Remind your student that college professors won't always go over reading materials and assignments in class, but they will test students on it!
- Even if your student did not need to study in high school, college courses will require much more work.
- Many professors won't take attendance, but missing class means missing important material—and the chance to ask questions. Remind your student to go to class!
- Know how your role has changed: When a student enters college, a parent's ability to communicate with school officials and view academic records is limited.

## WHEN YOUR STUDENT EXPERIENCES CHALLENGES HELP HER OR HIM RISE TO THE OCCASION.

Encourage your student to:

- Start by talking to her or his professor or academic advisor/counselor.
- Take advantage of student services, including: tutoring, mentoring, counseling, librarians, and study sessions.
- Learn about important deadlines for making adjustments to her or his class schedule (drop dates, for example).

## REMIND YOUR STUDENT TO USE THE TIME-MANAGEMENT SKILLS SHE OR HE HAS DEVELOPED OVER THE YEARS.

Structure is key. They need to:

- Create and use a calendar or planner.
- Create and follow a to-do list.
- Establish daily routines for studying and keeping track of materials.

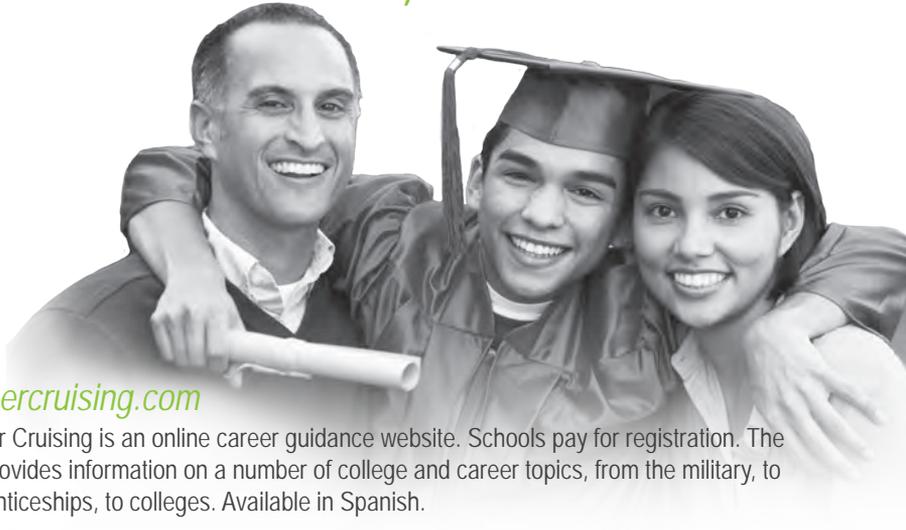
## ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENT TO GET INVOLVED AT COLLEGE.

Friends, especially those who want to do well in college, become an important support network, and campus activities are an important way to broaden the type of people your student will meet.

- Much important college learning takes place outside the classroom.
- Organizations, clubs, and activities help students clarify and refine their career goals and begin building a good résumé for future employment.

# Encouragement and Help Is All Around

CHECK OUT THESE ONLINE RESOURCES.  
(AND SHARE THEM WITH YOUR STUDENT.)



## [careercruising.com](http://careercruising.com)

Career Cruising is an online career guidance website. Schools pay for registration. The site provides information on a number of college and career topics, from the military, to apprenticeships, to colleges. Available in Spanish.

## [collegeboard.com](http://collegeboard.com) and [act.org/path/parent](http://act.org/path/parent)

These are sites from the major testing services. They have information for parents, including tests, college search, scholarships, and majors. Available in Spanish.

## [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov)

This is the government website where you can download the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Available in Spanish.

## [collegeillinois.org](http://collegeillinois.org)

The Illinois Student Assistance Commission website's goal is "Making college accessible and affordable for all Illinois students." Available in Spanish.

## [aie.org](http://aie.org)

The Adventures in Educations (AIE) website is sponsored by the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation. Its goal is to "help students plan and complete their journey through higher education." The site offers many resources. Available in Spanish.

## [fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com)

Fastweb is a free scholarship search website.

## [careercornerstone.org](http://careercornerstone.org)

The Sloan Career Cornerstone is a nonprofit website with information about careers in science, math, engineering, and technology.

A U.S. Department of Education report suggests that students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores;
- Pass their classes, earn credits, and be promoted;
- Attend school regularly; and
- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

Un informe de U.S. Department of Education sugiere que los estudiantes con los padres que se involucran, sin importar sus ingresos o sus antecedentes, son más propensos a:

- Obtener calificaciones y resultados de exámenes más altos;
- Pasar sus clases, obtener créditos, y ser promovidos;
- Asistir a la escuela con regularidad; y
- Graduarse y continuar con una educación superior.



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1700 Spartan Drive, Elgin, IL 60123 [elgin.edu/collegereadiness](http://elgin.edu/collegereadiness)