

Countdown to SUNY



9th Grade Plan

Did you know . . .

That college graduates earn substantially more money than high school graduates? Here is a breakdown of the median 2008 earnings by college degree:

Earn more money	\$100,000	Professional Degree
	\$91,900	Doctoral Degree
	\$67,300	Master's Degree
	\$55,700	Bachelor's (4-year) Degree
	\$42,000	Associate (2-year) Degree
	\$33,800	High School Diploma or GED
	\$24,300	No High School Diploma

Source: Education Pays 2010, The College Board

The courses you take in high school are important.

Whether you plan to attend a 4-year college, technology or community college, take at least five academic classes every semester in high school to develop skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening and reasoning.

Colleges are looking for a solid foundation of learning that you can build upon. Keep in mind that even though they may not be required for high school graduation, most colleges prefer the following:

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of social studies
- 3 years of math (including Integrated Algebra, Geometry, and Algebra 2/Trigonometry)
- 3 years of laboratory science
- 2-3 years of the same foreign language
- Courses in fine arts and computer science are strongly recommended

Many states have diploma options available to students, and these options frequently require additional high school coursework. For example, to be eligible for the New York State Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation, the following courses are required in high school:

- 4 units of English
 - 4 units of social studies
 - 3 units of mathematics
 - 3 units of science
 - 0.5 unit of health
 - 1 unit of the arts (dance, music, theatre or visual arts)
 - 3 units of languages other than English *
 - 2 units (*typically four school years*) of physical education
 - 1.5 units of sequence courses, electives *
- * Units required are adjusted for students taking a sequence in career and technical education or the arts.

Except where noted, each unit typically represents one school year of successfully completed coursework.

Your counselor can help you make the right class choices.

Take academics seriously and keep your grades up.

Your high school grades are important and the difficulty of your courses may be a factor in a college's decision to offer you admission. College admission officers will pay close attention to your grade point average (GPA), class rank, Advanced Placement (AP), and other honors-level courses, as well as your scores on standardized tests and state exams such as the Regents in New York State. Regents' scores are reflected on your transcript and will be viewed by colleges. So, challenge yourself by taking tougher courses and maintaining good grades. Not only will this help prepare you for standardized tests (such as the PSAT, SAT and ACT), but it will also determine your eligibility for some

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colleges. Many high school seniors realize their grade point average is too low for the colleges they wish to attend simply because of the grades they earned in the 9th and 10th grades. Don't let this happen to you! All grades count—from 9th to 12th.

Get a head start on your SUNY application.

Begin building your SUNY Online Academic Record (SOAR) at the end of 9th grade. You will be able to return at the end of each academic year to update SOAR with additional courses and test scores. And, by the time you are ready to apply in your senior year, your academic record will be nearly complete! Request an unofficial transcript from your school counselor to begin your SOAR. Then, go to <https://www.suny.edu/soar> and create an account. Be sure to remember your login and password and keep them in a secure location.

Get to know your teachers, counselor and principal.

Show them that you are both serious about learning and are a hard worker. When you begin applying to college in a couple of years, you will have people who know you well. Those who know you well will write the strongest recommendation letters.

Ask questions

Review your transcript yearly, especially if a grade has been changed on your report card by a teacher or a transcript update has been submitted by your counselor. Be sure to have these changes verified by your parent/guardian. This is crucial as teachers and counselors retire and without written proof, your transcript and GPA may be negatively affected.

Be sure to check out the College Board's 20 Questions to Ask Your School Counselor at <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/building-support-networks/20-questions-to-ask-your-school-counselor>.

Get involved.

In school activities . . . community service . . . part-time work . . .

Find something you like and stick to it! Colleges pay attention to your life outside of the classroom and value these types of experiences. Begin getting involved now. Be sure to keep (and update regularly) a list of your activities, awards, honors, jobs, and offices you have held in organizations. Colleges want to see passion and commitment, and the key is not to be involved in every club, but to select a few that really appeal to you.

It is not the quantity but the quality and longevity of involvement in activities or organizations that matters. For example, if, as a 9th grader, you join the school newspaper and are a club reporter and then in 10th grade become a sports reporter, in 11th, a sports editor and in 12th, the editor-in-chief, it demonstrates growth in leadership. In community service, the same applies. It is not a sign of commitment if you simply

participate in a charity walk once a year for four years. Rather, you should find something in which you have an avid interest. Whether it is an animal shelter, a nursing home, or a soup kitchen, the idea is that you stay and put in significant time. As your commitment becomes obvious to the program coordinator, you should be given more responsibility and by your fourth year, a special project which you lead. For example, if you were to work in a nursing home and gained the respect and trust of those in charge, by the fourth year, they might acknowledge your sense of responsibility and leadership skills allowing you to plan, implement, and supervise a special program like a "Seniors Prom."

Make the most of your summer.

Keep busy by doing something meaningful such as finding a summer job, identifying a volunteer experience in a career field that interests you, learning or perfecting a skill or hobby, going to summer school to get ahead or catch up, attending a summer program or camp, or catching up on your reading. Additional ideas include the following:

- Find a community service project and commit significant hours
- Attend a summer camp and hone your testing skills, athletic skills, or a hobby such as music
- Find a summer college program where you can master subject areas of interest or leadership training
- Go to summer school to advance or to repeat a subject that was failed
- Utilize the 10th grade reading lists for English, social studies, etc. to complete assignments and free up time during the beginning of the school year
- College Board's 5 ways to stay on track in summer at <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/outside-the-classroom/5-ways-to-stay-on-track-in-summer>.

There are many helpful resources! Here are a few to get you started:

- Hourly employment opportunities at www.snagajob.com
- Summer jobs at www.summerjobs.com
- Jobs for teenagers at www.teens4hire.org
- Internships at www.fastweb.com/content/featured-internships

Start saving for college.

It's not too early to begin saving for college. Learn about 529 plans at www.savingforcollege.com. The College Savings Plans Network is a national non-profit association dedicated to making college accessible and affordable for families.

Another way to begin saving for college is by earning points when you shop. Learn more at www.upromise.com.

Links to non-SUNY Web sites and information are provided for your convenience and do not constitute an endorsement.

Shop
and
save