

# GETTING STARTED

## CAREER/COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE FOR NINTH GRADE STUDENTS



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Rockville, Maryland



# **Getting Started**

## **Career/College Planning Guide for Ninth Grade Students**

In high school, you will be involved in various academic, community, and social activities. Each of these activities will provide a wealth of experiences and help clarify your interests, goals, and plans for the future. Active involvement in high school is one key to a successful and rewarding high school experience. Get involved, take charge, and become the best student you can be. As you and your parents plan your program, your school counselor is available to help you every step of the way.

This handbook is designed to provide you with information about time management and study skills improvement, decision making, career information, college planning, and college admission tests. Getting started with assignment or work can sometimes be a problem. However, if you put into practice ideas from this booklet, you may find that your high school years will be more rewarding. Please ask your counselor for additional materials or clarification about information in this handbook.

### **Acknowledgments**

Thanks to Margaret C. Morrison, former acting supervisor of guidance, and to Catherine Wilson, counselor specialist, for preparing this handbook in 1994. Thanks also are due to the MCPS counselors and career information coordinators who prepared the booklet, *Getting Ready*, for permission to incorporate portions of that text into this booklet, and to Phyllis Vestal, English teacher, for permission to use her graphic organizer on pages 4–5. Kent Weaver, high school counselor specialist, is responsible for revisions and updates. His work also is appreciated.

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**This booklet belongs to**

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# Time Management

## Plan your time

Success in school depends on how well you plan your time. Your time should be planned so that you can get your work done and still have time for yourself. Your schedule should be comfortable. You must plan your time to fit your needs, or it just won't work.

How do you spend your time? Do you have time to do all the things you really want to do? Make a photocopy of the time-planning chart. Use it to keep a record of how you spend your time for one week. At the end of the week, look at the chart and ask yourself these questions:

- What are three main ways I spend my time?
- Do I like the way I am spending my time?
- What would I like to change?

Now use the weekly list of priorities chart to plan next week. You can photocopy the time-planning chart below and plan a schedule for all the things you must do and the things you would like to do. Use the five steps for planning your time to help you outline your schedule.

Some weeks are busier than others, with just too many tasks to do. Sometimes it is hard to decide which important activity to do first. Following a time-management plan should help you complete your major tasks.

## Steps for planning your time

- Step 1.** List everything that you have to do for a whole week.
- Step 2.** Give every job or activity a time and place. Write this on a time chart.
- Step 3.** Make changes in your schedule (revise your schedule) as the week passes.
- Step 4.** Check off each item on the schedule after you have done it.
- Step 5.** Reward yourself when you finish a very hard task.

## Time-planning chart

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6 a.m.							
7 a.m.							
8 a.m.							
9 a.m.							
10 a.m.							
11 a.m.							
12 noon							
1 p.m.							
2 p.m.							
3 p.m.							
4 p.m.							
5 p.m.							
6 p.m.							
7 p.m.							
8 p.m.							
9 p.m.							

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# Weekly list of priorities

Use this sheet to plan.

1. Make a list of things you always do each week.
2. Make a list of other things you must do this week.
3. Make a list of things you would like to do this week, if you have time.

## Things I always do each week

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Other things I must do this week

For school:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

For home:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Things I would like to do if I have time this week

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Now, review your lists. Use the weekly chart to plan another week. Do you see improvements? Sometimes everything won't fit into your schedule and some plans must be postponed. Choose the things that are most important to do first. This is called "setting priorities."

Review your choices and ask yourself if they are wise ones. You may wish to review your list and plans with your parents

and teachers. With good planning, you will be ready when a big project must be done.

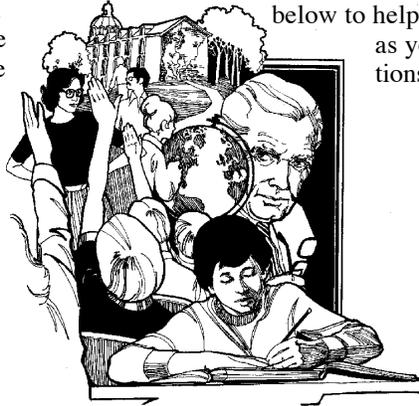
The information in this section was taken from an MCPS booklet titled *Blueprint for Study Strategies*. There are many other helpful techniques in this booklet. Ask your counselor for a copy.

# Decision Making

*“The quality of the rest of your life can be enhanced or diminished by the seemingly unimportant decisions you make day by day.”*

—Margaret C. Morrison

Each of us make decisions every day. Often, we are not consciously aware that we have mentally thought through a situation, discarded ideas, and made note of advantages. In high school you will be expected to make many decisions, some of which will affect the rest of your high school years and beyond. Now is a good time to give thought to the many important decisions you will have to make in high school.

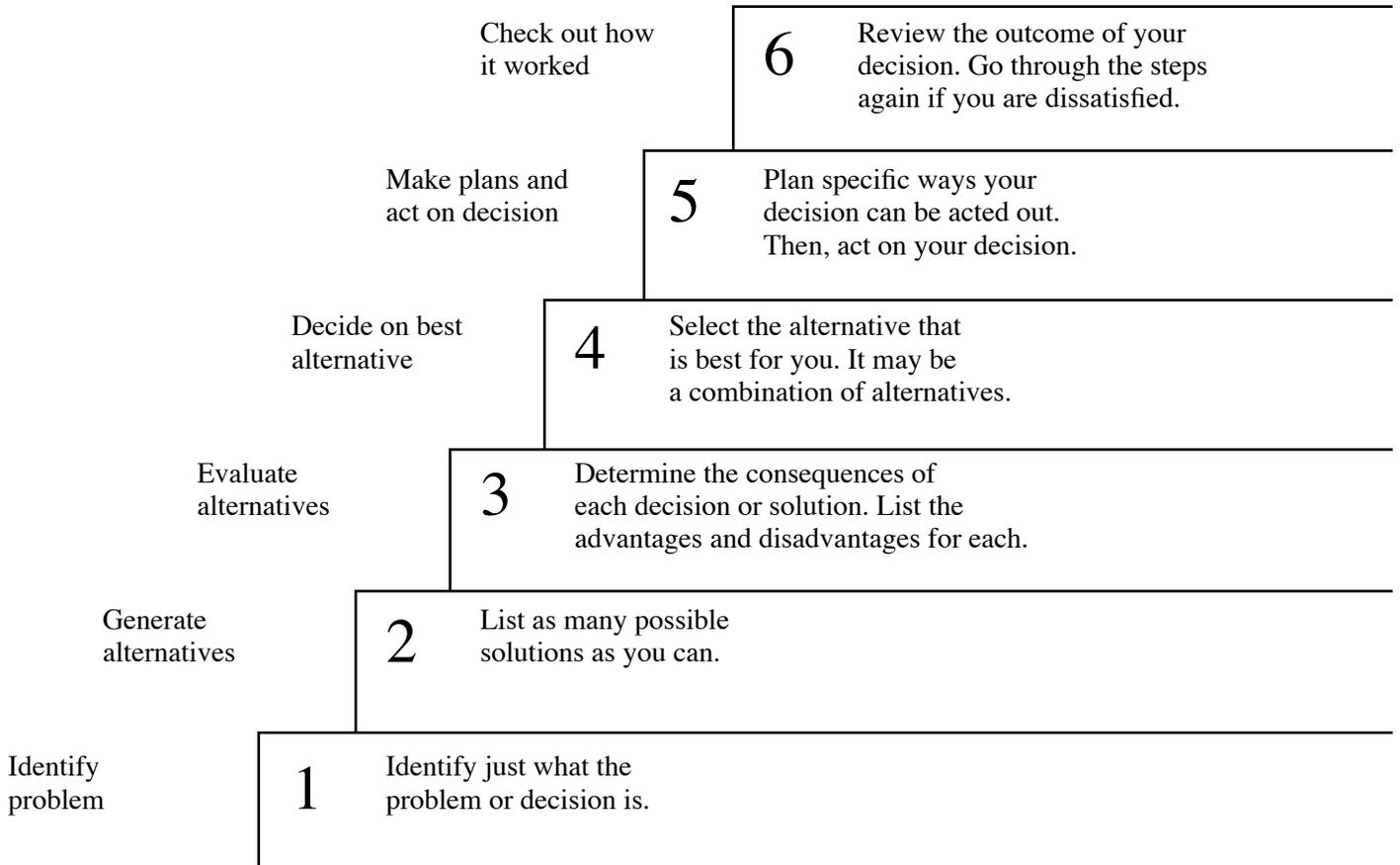


What decisions will you make about the following:

- *Should I go to college? get a full-time job? join the military? attend a technical school?*
- *Should I take a college preparation curriculum?*
- *Should I take Honors and advanced courses?*

Good decisions require careful thought. Use the chart below to help organize your decision-making procedures as you make decisions about careers, course selections, college choices, and postsecondary plans.

## Steps in decision making



# Personal Mission Statement

*"It takes courage to grow up and turn out to be who you really are."*

—e.e. cummings

You can use your knowledge about yourself to help define your personal and career goals. The more you know about yourself, the more successful you will be in defining goals within the framework of your own values.

Take the time to complete the personal mission statement. Use the first worksheet as a prewriting tool to help you brainstorm your various ideas. Next, write your statements, expressing your ideas in sentence/paragraph form on the My Personal Mission Statement Worksheet.

You may not know "what you want to be," but you should begin thinking about "the kind of person you want to be." Revisit your personal mission comments from time to time, and update information as necessary.

## Writing a personal mission statement

### Prewriting, brainstorming: Asking yourself about you

#### Who I Am

(Roles like student, daughter, brother; your personality — serious, social, giving, quiet, fair, helpful, open-minded, etc.)

#### My Strengths and Talents

(A leader, creative, intelligent, hard-working, artistic, athletic, peacemaker, good communicator, team player, enthusiastic, etc.)

#### My Weaknesses

(Fearful/timid, a procrastinator, insecure, narrow-minded, disorganized, constantly late, lose temper easily, etc.)

#### My Values

(Excellence, justice, service, ethical, religious, honesty, personal growth, etc.)

#### What I Hope to Become in Life

(Career path, dependable, forgiving, loyal, dedicated to..., courageous, principle-centered, balanced, happy, monetarily successful, secure, healthy, etc.)

#### Specific Goals

(**Short term:** academic commitment, accept responsibilities, read more, take an "outside school" class or instruction in your area of interest, community service, better diet, more sleep, more exercise, spend more time with family, etc. **Long term:** go to college or vocational school, pursue a specific career, improve "weaknesses," develop talents, etc.)

#### Steps Necessary to Reach My Goals

(Seek help in a specific subject; go to library once a week to check out a book of interest; study at least "x" number of hours a night regardless of homework; take an outside class on arts, sports, or computers, etc.)

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# My personal mission statement

**Name**

I, \_\_\_\_\_,

**Who I am**

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**My strengths and talents**

recognize my strengths and develop my talents as a person who is

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**My weaknesses**

and acknowledge my weaknesses

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**My values**

I hope to lead a life centered on the following beliefs (values):

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**The kind of person**

**I hope to  
become in life**

and envision myself becoming a person who is

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**Specific goals**

I have set these goals in order to fulfill my hopes:

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**Steps necessary to  
reach my goals**

I will start on this journey by taking one or more steps this year. I plan to

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# Countdown to Graduation

Good decisions follow a timetable. When you complete each task, record the date.

## Ninth Grade

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### Fall

- \_\_\_\_\_ Make an appointment to meet with your counselor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discuss your academic/career plans and personal and academic strengths.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Visit your career center. Become familiar with the resources available there.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Participate in school extracurricular activities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take the PSAT, if appropriate.

### Spring

- \_\_\_\_\_ Begin working with *CX Online*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make an appointment with your counselor to review your academic progress and plan your program for next year. Talk about your grades. Remember the grades earned in the ninth grade are part of your official high school transcript.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend career information programs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Work on earning your student service learning hours.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use the *Summer Search* booklet and visit your career center to locate summer enrichment programs.

## Tenth Grade

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### Fall

- \_\_\_\_\_ Continue your participation in extracurricular activities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take the PSAT. Check with your counselor for more information.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Visit your career center.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Continue working with *CX Online*.

### Winter

- \_\_\_\_\_ Talk with your counselor about your grades.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with your counselor to discuss results of the PSAT.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Find out what kinds of postsecondary schools offer the education you need to meet your career plans.

### Spring

- \_\_\_\_\_ Plan next year's program to reflect your interests, school progress, and emerging career plans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Continue working with *CX Online*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consider career and technology course offerings at the Thomas Edison High School of Technology.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use the *Summer Search* booklet and visit your career center to locate summer enrichment programs.

### Summer

- \_\_\_\_\_ Continue earning student service learning hours, particularly through activities related to potential career plans.

## Eleventh Grade

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### Fall

- \_\_\_\_\_ Take the PSAT/NMSQT.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend college programs sponsored by your guidance department.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend career presentations sponsored by your school, MCPS, and the business community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Acquire volunteer or job experiences related to career plans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Monitor your student service learning hours.

### Fall/Winter

- \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with your counselor about your progress.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with college admissions representatives who visit your school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Get information on apprenticeship programs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Get information on trade and technical schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take career interest inventories.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Continue working with *CX Online* or *Choices*.

### Early Spring

- \_\_\_\_\_ Consider career goals as you select classes and revise your high school planning sheet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Plan next year's program to enhance prospects for employment opportunities and college admissions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Register for ACT and/or SAT I/SAT II.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use the computer search programs to identify appropriate colleges and/or trade and technical schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consider an internship for your senior year.

### Spring

- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend college fairs and school-sponsored programs. Confer with your counselor about post-secondary plans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend career information programs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spend time in the career center exploring materials. Find out about summer enrichment programs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Begin visiting colleges and /or trade and technical schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Assemble a file of materials collected from colleges and/or trade and technical schools and those distributed by your guidance department.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make interview appointments for the early fall if appropriate. Practice interviewing skills.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Become familiar with college and job applications.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Develop your résumé/personal references.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Continue earning student service learning hours if needed.

## Twelfth Grade

### Summer/Fall

- \_\_\_\_\_ Make an appointment with your counselor for you and your parents to discuss postsecondary plans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Request applications from colleges and/or trade and technical schools. Set up file system.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Register for ACT, SAT I, and/or SAT II.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stay abreast of all scholarship opportunities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Review high school records, including graduation requirements.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete any remaining student service learning hours.

### Late Summer/Winter

- \_\_\_\_\_ Visit college and/or trade and technical schools. Talk to admissions representatives who visit your school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Seek out scholarship information and apply as appropriate.

### Fall

- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend college and career programs sponsored by your guidance department.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Familiarize yourself with your school's transcript request procedure and follow it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Register for ACT, SAT I, and SAT II tests if needed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Talk with your counselor about your academic progress.

### Fall/Winter

- \_\_\_\_\_ Fill out applications by December 1 if possible. Abide by both school and college deadlines.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Seek letters of recommendation if needed. Give teachers and counselors sufficient notice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete a résumé.

### December

- \_\_\_\_\_ If appropriate, have your parents complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other financial aid forms, if required by the college, and file after January 1.

### Spring

- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend job fairs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Maryland Department of Economics and Employment Development for job openings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Maintain good grades and good attendance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Notify your counselor of your application status as you hear from the colleges.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Request a final transcript to be sent to the college you will attend in the fall.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Notify the colleges you are not planning to attend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Perfect your job-interviewing skills.

# Definitions

In high school, certain terms and their meanings might be confusing. The following listing will help you understand some of the high school jargon.

**High school credits**—All subjects in high school are taught by semester. The semester or final grade is a compilation of the quarterly grades and the final exam. A passing final grade in a semester course earns a 0.5 credit. A total of 22 credits in required and elective subjects is needed to earn a high school diploma. Other graduation requirements also apply.

**Transcript**—A transcript is a record of all courses taken in high school, the level of the courses, and the final grade earned in each course. Usually, colleges and employers want to review a student transcript before accepting a student in a college or a job.

**Grade Point Average (GPA)**—Each final grade earned signifies points. An “A” is 4 points, “B” is 3 points, “C” is 2 points, “D” is 1 point, and an “E” is 0 points. The sum of the final grade points divided by the number of courses determines the cumulative grade point average (GPA).

**Weighted Grade Point Average (WGPA)**—An “A” or a “B” in an Honors or advanced class earns an additional point, as does a “C” in an advanced class. These increased points result in a “weighted” grade. The sum of the final grade points, including those “weighted” for Honors and advanced classes divided by the number of courses, is a cumulative, weighted

grade point average (WGPA). MCPS does not rank students. A profile of grades by class is provided to colleges.

**Academic Eligibility**—Students must maintain a 2.0 marking period average with not more than one failing grade in the preceding marking period in order to participate in extracurricular activities. The marking period average is not the same as the GPA.

**Student Service Learning (SSL)**—SSL is an unpaid activity within the curriculum, school, or outside community that provides service to an individual or group to address a school or community need. Hours accumulated are counted toward the graduation requirement for student service.

**National Honor Society (NHS)**—This society comprises tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students who have demonstrated outstanding accomplishments in academics, character, leadership, and service. Not all schools have a chapter of the NHS, and there are different eligibility requirements among the schools that do have chapters. Check with your counselor or NHS sponsor for more information.

**High School Diploma**—A diploma is a degree issued to a student who has successfully met the subject, credit, and other requirements issued by the state and county boards of education, met the attendance requirements, and passed the required Maryland Competency Prerequisites.

# Career Planning

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## What is career planning?

When you were very young, you were asked, “What are you going to be when you grow up?” You probably had several answers. Career planning begins very early in life and is the accumulation of the experiences (in school and out) that you have had. In high school, you should begin to pursue the issue of career planning in a systematic manner. Make an appointment with your counselor to begin this quest.

Your high school has a career center and a career information coordinator (CIC). The center has materials to help you learn about your interests and possible occupations. It also contains up-to-date information for career planning. As you review and revise your high school planning sheet, speak with your counselor about your career goals. Your student service learning activities also will help you find out about different careers.

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## What career assessments are available?

### **Bridges.com**

Bridges.com is the comprehensive program in MCPS schools to assist students in career decision making. Bridges.com also includes several different college search engines, and a Portfolio section where students can save career and college exploration and planning information, and develop a résumé. The school network-based component for high school students is *Choices*. The Internet component for middle school through high school students is *CX Online*.

### **CX Online/Career Planning**

Students find this site exciting and informative, with fun articles about careers, recreation, education, and skills. In *Zones* hundreds of occupations are arranged by career cluster. *Career Finder* is a quick and easy self-assessment of interests and skills. Colorful graphics compare a student’s self-rating of skills and interests to suggested occupations. *Career Research Tool* guides students through Skills, Values, Interests, and Personality inventories to generate career research leads. The sight license for *CX Online* allows for career exploration to be accessed on the Internet—both at school and at home. Each suggested career can be explored in detail, and there are Web links to professional associations, colleges that offer the required courses, and additional related articles.

### **Choices/College Selection**

The *Choices* program allows students to investigate more than 7,000 two- and four-year colleges, and to develop an individualized list of colleges and universities, according to personally selected criteria such as location, size, majors, athletic and other special programs, and financial aid availability. There also are direct links to the Web pages for numerous colleges and universities listed and to online applications where these are available. Vocational/technical schools also can be explored. Financial aid application and scholarships are available as well.

### **Career Interest & Aptitude Tests**

In addition to the Bridges computer online assessment/interest inventory, most career center self-administered instruments or other computer inventories may be done individually or may be used as part of class assignments. Also available is the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). The ASVAB is administered free to students in Grades 10, 11, and 12. Check the career center for the testing date. Taking the ASVAB in no way involves a commitment to the military.

# MCPS Career Clusters

## Existing and Potential Career Academies

### ARTS, HUMANITIES, MEDIA, AND COMMUNICATIONS CLUSTER

- Academy of Design and Merchandising
- Academy of Graphics and Electronic Media
  
- *Academy of Media Literacy\**
- *Academy of Media Technicians\**
- *Academy of Photojournalism\**

### CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CLUSTER

- Academy of Carpentry
- Academy of Heating and Air Conditioning
- Academy of Masonry
- Academy of Construction Electricity
  
- *Academy of Construction Management\**
- *Academy of Real Estate\**
- *Academy of Urban Planning\**

### HUMAN AND CONSUMER SERVICES, HOSPITALITY, AND TOURISM CLUSTER

- Academy of Cosmetology
- Academy of Culinary Arts and Technology
- Academy of Hotel/Travel
- Academy of Manicuring
- Academy of Professional Restaurant Management

### SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, ENGINEERING, AND MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGIES CLUSTER

- Academy of Cabinetmaking
- Academy of Design, Illustrating, and Drafting Technology
- Academy of Electronic Technology
- Academy of Engineering Technology
- *Academy of Architectural Design\**

### BIOSCIENCES, HEALTH SCIENCE, AND MEDICINE CLUSTER

- Academy of Biotechnology
- Academy of Medical Careers
  
- *Academy of Forensic Medicine\**
- *Academy of Sports Management/Medicine\**

### EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND CHILD STUDIES CLUSTER

- Academy of Early Child Development
  
- *Academy of Counseling\**
- *Academy of Education\**

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES CLUSTER

- National Academy of Information Technology
- Academy of Computer Maintenance and Repair
- Academy of Computer Programming
- Academy of Network Operations
- Academy of Web Site Development
  
- *Academy of Information Studies\**

### TRANSPORTATION, DISTRIBUTION, AND LOGISTICS CLUSTER

- Academy of Automotive Body Repair and Painting
- Academy of Automotive Service Assistants
- Academy of Automotive Technology
  
- *Academy of Automotive Dealership Training\**
- *Academy of Aviation\**
- *Academy of Maritime/Shipping/Ship Building\**
- *Academy of Public Transportation & Urban/Suburban Transportation Planning\**

### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE CLUSTER

- National Academy of Finance
- Academy of Accounting
- Academy of Business Management
- Academy of Information Systems Management
- Academy of Marketing
  
- *Academy of Entrepreneurship\**

### ENVIRONMENTAL, AGRICULTURAL, AND NATURAL RESOURCES CLUSTER

- Academy of Horticulture
- Academy of Landscaping/Nursery Management
  
- *Academy of Marine Sciences\**

### LAW, GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND ADMINISTRATION CLUSTER

- Academy of Fire and Rescue Services
- Academy of Emergency Medical Technicians
- Academy of JROTC
  
- *Academy of Criminal Justice\**
- *Academy of Public Advocacy\**

Cooperative Work Experience (CWE)/Internship opportunities exist in all clusters.

*\*Examples of academies that could be developed*

# What To Do After High School

## Apprenticeship Programs

An apprentice is a person who is—

- at least 16 years old,
- being trained in a particular trade by a skilled worker under a planned program on the job,
- taking classroom instruction (through adult education, at a community college, or in regular school if in a part-time job), and
- in training anywhere from one to six years (depending upon the trade—averaging three to four years).

Some additional facts:

- Employment is based on supply and demand
- The person wanting an apprenticeship may apply to and have a contract with one of the following:
  - an employer in the trade
  - the association of employers
  - the joint apprenticeship committee
  - the organization of employees registered with the apprenticeship council

For further information about specific apprenticeship programs, check in the career center and/or meet with your counselor.

## College/University

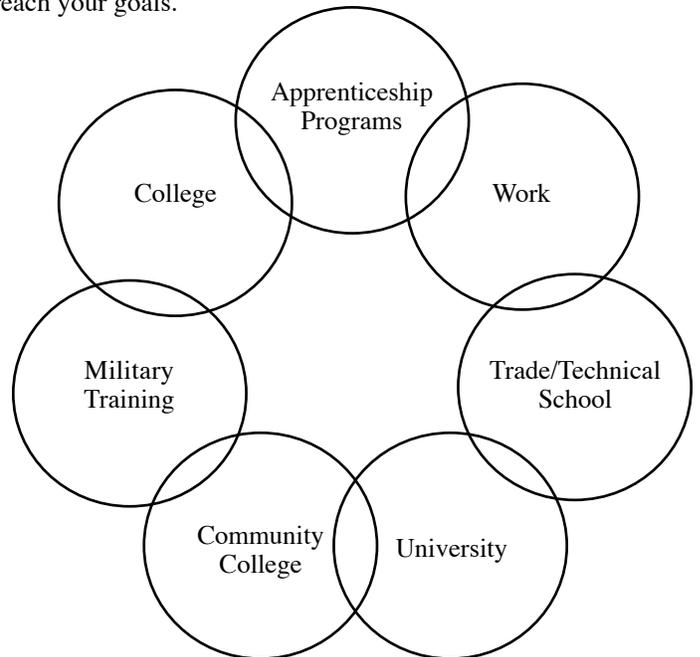
There are several types of colleges and universities. The career center at your school and your counselors have additional resources to help you choose the right school to pursue your career interests.

## Military Training

You can learn about your chances for success in the military by taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (AS-VAB). This test is given at local high schools free of charge.

Men and women may enlist in all branches of the military. Enlistment procedures are similar, but the services differ in length of enlistment and opportunities for specific training. Active military enlistments are available in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.

Find your circles of interest and begin the research needed to reach your goals.



## Trade and Technical Training

The Thomas Edison High School of Technology and many high schools offer a variety of programs in which students may obtain technical training during high school. Landscaping, biotechnology, and systems engineering technology are a few of the programs that begin in high school and continue at Montgomery College.

Community colleges, adult education, and private schools have trade and technical training programs for people who are no longer in high school.

## Work/Postsecondary Education

If you decide to get a job immediately after high school you should—

- develop some job-finding and job-keeping skills,
- talk to a counselor or a career information coordinator about job possibilities and/or visit the Maryland State Department of Employment and Training office,
- visit with a cooperative work experience teacher in your high school,
- visit your career and media centers,
- talk with employers about combining work and a part-time college program, and
- investigate career education courses that match your interests.

# College Planning

Going to college is one of many options available to you as you pursue your career plans. In either case, a certain amount of planning is required. The high school plan that you made with your parents and counselor should reflect courses that meet college entrance requirements. The choices of your courses and the level of your courses should reflect your academic abilities, talents, and career interests. Certain courses act as gatekeepers for college entrance: algebra and geometry are two such courses. Aspiring to go to college can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Education is important not only for its own sake, but people with more education have higher earnings within virtually all occupations.

No matter what your postsecondary (after high school) goals are, planning is important. Graduation requirements are complicated, and several options or programs are available to you as you move through high school.

You completed a high school plan in Grade 8 as you prepared to enter high school. Now that you are in high school it is important to reevaluate and revise your plan. You will need to do this yearly with your parents and counselor. Make sure that the choices you make this year will help you reach your career plans for after high school.

The *Student Educational and Planning Worksheet* (MCPS Form 56045), on page 15, can serve as a way to ensure that you meet all graduation requirements and prepare yourself for your postsecondary goals. Use it in conjunction with your *MCPS High School Course Bulletin* to create or update your own high school plan. Your high school counselor will assist you.

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## College admission requirements

Know the requirements for a high school diploma and the requirements of the colleges. All state universities in Maryland require successful completion of specific high school courses, four credits in English, a minimum of three credits in each of the disciplines of social studies and science, and a minimum of two credits in a foreign language. A minimum of three credits in mathematics also is required, which must include Algebra I, geometry, and Algebra II. The most competitive universities and colleges throughout the United States may require more credits in some of the courses listed. Your choice of college major also may determine whether you should take more than the minimum number of credits.

To find out the admission requirements for particular colleges and universities, visit the career center and check out college catalogues to review.

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## College-testing programs

Standardized college admissions testing programs assume that you are able to read critically, write effectively, and demonstrate a sound background in mathematics. The tests measure knowledge and skills that have developed gradually as a result of both in-school and out-of-school experiences. You need to be able to think about logical relationships among words, read complex prose analytically, and have a good foundation in algebra and geometry.

Statistics show that 9 out of 10 MCPS graduates go on to postsecondary institutions. Most students are enrolled in college preparatory courses. To make the most of your high school years, consider the following:

- Take the prepractice PSAT test given by most high schools to ninth or tenth graders.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT test in Grade 9, especially if you are enrolled in geometry or above.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT in Grade 10.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT in Grade 11 in order to qualify for scholarship programs offered to high-scoring students.
- Take the SAT I or ACT and SAT II in the spring of the junior year, and repeat, if necessary. Take the test again in the fall in Grade 12, if warranted.
- Enroll in rigorous classes. Such classes prepare you for success on college admission tests. Take Honors and Advanced Placement courses and work diligently.
- Don't hesitate to ask for help or information from your teachers and counselor.
- Remember that the best preparation for successful performance on any standardized college test is serious study, in and out of school, as well as **Reading**.
- Your value and worth as a person have no relationship to your SAT scores.

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# College-planning tips

## GRADE 9

- Read
- Make sure your courses reflect a college preparatory curriculum. The caliber of subjects you choose and the grades you earn become the most important record colleges use in making admissions decisions.
- Make an appointment with your counselor to discuss academic, career, and personal issues.
- Speak with your counselor about taking the PSAT/NMSQT as a practice test. Remember, however, that only students who take the test in the junior year of high school can qualify for National Merit scholarships.
- Talk with your parents and teachers about your interests, aspirations, and goals.
- Visit the career center and get information about careers, colleges, financial aid, and scholarship opportunities.
- Visit college campuses as you vacation with your parents.
- Participate in extracurricular school/community activities.
- Get in the habit of completing class assignments and homework, and participating in class discussions and activities. Remember that the grades you earn in the ninth grade become part of your official high school transcript.
- Maintain excellent attendance.

## GRADE 10

- Read
- Continue using all the tips offered for Grade 9.
- Speak with your counselor about meeting with college representatives who visit your school.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT.
- Find out what kinds of postsecondary schools offer the education you need to meet your career plans.
- Plan next year's program to reflect your interests and abilities.
- Consult with your counselor and teachers about taking SAT II tests in subjects you have completed.
- Consider career and technology course offerings at the Thomas Edison High School of Technology.
- Consider a college summer program for high school students. Ask your counselor for a copy of Summer Search, an MCPS booklet listing such programs.
- Identify career interests, aptitudes, and abilities using an interest inventory available in your career center.
- Visit the career center and speak with the career information coordinator and your counselor about scholarship opportunities.
- Develop skills in interviewing and completing job/college applications.



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# Getting Ready for College:

## School Counseling Services Unit Montgomery County Public Schools

### A Quick College-Planning Guide for Students with Special Needs

#### DO YOU KNOW?

IDEA, the “special education law” does not apply to higher education. Postsecondary institutions are not required to design special programs for students with disabilities, only to provide accommodations that allow for equal access to the regular program.

#### Develop self-awareness

- Become familiar with how you learn best.
- Understand your strengths as well as your special needs.
- Know which compensatory strategies work for you and apply them to your learning.
- Build strengths and areas of interest through extracurricular activities, service learning projects, internships, or work experiences.

#### Practice self-advocacy

- Prepare to assume responsibility for advocating for yourself in college by practicing while in high school.
- Attend your Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and be an active participant.
- Use logical, clear, and positive language to communicate your successes and concerns.
- Learn to be comfortable describing to others how you learn most effectively, your disability, and your academic needs.

#### Prepare yourself well

- Take the most challenging courses available to you and work hard in each of them.
- Talk with your counselor and teachers about the standardized tests you will need to take and plan a testing timeline.
- Consult with your counselor about whether or not you will qualify for accommodations on standardized tests, how and when to apply for those accommodations, and the testing plan that best meets your needs.

#### Explore options

- Talk with your counselor and visit the school’s career center to identify a list of 6 to 10 schools that interest you based on academic programs, admissions requirements, cost, financial aid opportunities, location, size, social activities, etc.
- Narrow the list by familiarizing yourself with the services each school can provide to special needs students.
- Visit the school, if possible, to get an impression of campus life, classes, residential facilities, etc.
- Contact the Disability Support Services Office to get your specific questions answered.

#### Complete the application process

- Understand admissions requirements for the schools you have selected and be sure you are able to provide everything that is requested. You are not required to disclose your disability. Discuss with your counselor and your family whether or not you will share that information. Colleges may not use the disability as a basis for denying admission. On the other hand, they are under no obligation to alter their admissions requirements or standards for special needs students. You must meet the admissions criteria established by the school.
- Follow your high school’s application timeline to be sure all requirements are completed on time.
- Complete, then submit your application(s).
- Make the most of your senior year!

# A quick college-planning guide for students with special needs

There are many factors to consider when selecting a college. In addition to exploring programs, location, size, cost, housing, career, and social opportunities, you also want to search for schools that offer the services you need to succeed academically. This guide is designed to help you with that search. When comparing one college with another, try using the following questions:

QUESTIONS	NAMES OF COLLEGES					NOTES
<i>Write the names of colleges that interest you at the top of the columns to right. Then mark a Y (for yes) or an N (for no) in response to each question, based on what you learn at the MCPS College Fair through talking with an admissions representative, consulting with your counselor, or gathering information from your high school career center.</i>						
<b>ADMISSIONS</b>						
Are admission criteria for students with special needs the same as for other students?						
Are any special assessments required?						
Is diagnostic testing available?						
Is there a unique summer orientation for students with special needs?						
Is documentation required to demonstrate special needs?						
<b>ACADEMIC SUPPORTS</b>						
Is the process for accessing special needs clear and easy to follow?						
Is there a fee for supports?						
Is tutoring available?						
Is remediation in basic skills available?						
Are study skills courses available?						
<b>AUXILIARY AIDS: Does the school provide the following?</b>						
Calculators						
Laptop computer						
Personal desktop computer						
Scan-and-read programs						
Screen-enlarging programs						
Screen readers						
Speech-recognition programs						
Spelling/grammar assistants						
Other						
<b>AUXILIARY SERVICES: Does the school provide the following?</b>						
Advocates						
Alternative exam arrangements						
Duplicating at no cost or reduced cost						
Mentors						
Note takers						
Priority registration						
Readers						
Scribes						
Other						
<b>STUDENT SUPPORTS: Does the school offer the following?</b>						
Career counseling						
Career placement						
Internship programs						
Individual counseling						
Small-group counseling						
Student organizations for special needs students						
Derived from <i>Peterson's Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Disorders</i>						

**Montgomery County Public Schools • Office of Pupil Community Services • Rockville, Maryland 20850**

**STUDENT EDUCATIONAL AND PLANNING WORKSHEET**

**For graduation, students must earn a minimum of 22 credits; pass basic competency tests in reading, writing, math, and citizenship; and earn Student Service Learning (SSL) hours.**

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Last First Middle

Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Student ID # \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor \_\_\_\_\_

Career Interests:  Communications Cluster  Business Cluster  Technology Cluster  Health/Environment Cluster  
 Human Resources Cluster  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Postsecondary Goal:  Full-time employment  Military  4-year college  2-year college  Technical training  
 Specialized school  College and employment  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Subject Area		9th Grade	Credits Earned	10th Grade	Credits Earned	11th Grade	Credits Earned	12th Grade	Credits Earned	Total Credits
English <sup>1</sup>	4									
Social Studies	3									
Mathematics	4									
Science	3									
Fine Arts	1									
Technology Education	1									
Physical Education	1									
Health	0.5									

Students must complete at least one of the program options listed below to meet graduation requirements.

Foreign Language <i>or</i> Advanced Technology	2									
<i>or</i> Career Development	3-9									
Additional Electives <sup>2</sup>										
Total Credits	⇒									
SSL	60 hours									

<sup>1</sup>See MCPS Course Bulletin for admission requirements to all Maryland state colleges and Maryland Certificate of Merit requirements.

<sup>2</sup>List only classes in subject areas not mentioned above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature, Student \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature, Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature, Counselor \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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# Notes



This document is available in an alternate format, upon request, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, by contacting the Department of Communications, 850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20850-1744, 301-279-3391 and TDD at 301-279-3323.

Individuals who need accommodations, including sign language interpretation or other special assistance, in communicating with the Montgomery County Public Schools may contact the Family and Community Partnerships Unit at 301-279-3100 and TDD at 301-279-3323, or at the address below.

In accordance with relevant laws and regulations, the Montgomery County Public Schools prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, marital status, religion, sex, age, disability, or sexual orientation in employment or in any of its education programs and activities. Make inquiries or complaints concerning discrimination to 301-279-3100 and TDD at 301-279-3323, or write to the address below:

Montgomery County Public Schools  
Family and Community Partnerships Unit  
451 Hungerford Drive, Suite 508  
Rockville, Maryland 20850-1744



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