

SOPHOMORES Are You Ready?

Can you believe it! In just three “short” years, you will be GRADUATING! You’re probably quite familiar with all the reminders of how you should be preparing yourself NOW for graduation and beyond. Your freshman year had you thinking about your future and all its possibilities, but now you need to dig down deep and get serious about those possibilities when you graduate. NOW is the time to be thinking about graduation, college, or a career. By making a plan and following through, you’ll look back and see that your future really was in the here and now. The following information is provided to help you focus on how to start the process of planning your future. **So... let's get READY, get SET, and GO!**

Get Ready...

...**BY TAKING THE SMART CORE CURRICULUM** - Meet with your school counselor to make sure your course schedule is on the right track. The courses you take now will set the stage for where you stand academically when you graduate. Take algebra, geometry, or even a higher level math class, and more than likely if you attend college, you will graduate. For more information, visit the Arkansas Department of Higher Education’s Web site at www.adhe.edu.

...**BY BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS** - Building a solid relationship with your teachers and counselors is critical. You may think that they don’t want to know you, but they really do! Students who ask questions and look for solutions will stand out to a teacher, and in turn, they will look forward to helping you build your high school résumé when you need it most, at graduation. It’s in YOUR best interest that you succeed and not fail.

...**BY TAKING A PERSONAL CAREER ASSESSMENT** - Start thinking more seriously about what careers make the best use of your skills and incorporate your interests. When you find a career that involves work that you love, you’ll set yourself up for success. You’ll be able to make the best decision, you’ll choose the right college, study the right subjects, and earn the degree that will get the job you want! Talk with your school counselor about the possibilities. Visit <https://www.actprofile.org> to take career assessments and inventories to narrow careers and jobs that fit your interests.

...**BY JOB SHADOWING** - Once you’ve taken the Career Assessment Test and have an idea what career may suit your interests, it might be interesting to observe someone in that particular field to help you get an idea of what that career might be like. Evaluate the characteristics of the person you have shadowed. Are you similar? What are your best qualities? What do you like to do?

...**BY USING YOUR TIME WISELY** - Consider working, volunteering in your community, or joining clubs in school such as athletics, music, journalism, or any other area that may interest you. Don’t be afraid to be a leader! Your extracurricular activities should never get in the way of your academics, but being involved will be an important factor in many college admission decisions later. Colleges look at community service involvement and want to see that you are not afraid to “give back” to your community.

...**BY KEEPING FOCUS ON YOUR GPA** - Challenge yourself to get the best grades possible and practice good study habits. Explore the possibility of more challenging courses and activities. Prioritize school, work, and extracurricular activities. You started building your GPA as you began your freshman year, and it now sets the stage for where you’ll stand academically at graduation. **EVERY GRADE COUNTS!** When a college asks to see your high school transcript, a “C” is less

likely to impress them than the “A.” Better to be an “A”LL IN’ student than to be a “C” U LATER’ student. Your teachers are there to help you so ask for extra help if you are having trouble in any of your classes, or consider a tutor.

Get Set . . .

. . .BY UPDATING YOUR HIGH SCHOOL RÉSUMÉ - Keep a list of all of your extracurricular activities in a folder in a safe place and label it “High School Résumé.” Include volunteerism, awards you receive, and your leadership roles in detail. College applications will ask you to list those, and you may be asked to write an essay telling about your experiences.

. . .BY BUDGETING AND SAVING - Learn how to manage your money. It’s not easy, but learning good money management now will help prepare you to succeed later on your own. Your family can estimate your financial aid/college cost using the FAFSA4caster at www.fafsa.ed.gov/FAFSA/app/f4cForm. If your family doesn’t already have a college savings account or plan for you, talk to them about starting one. Be wise about spending your money and save, save, save.

...BY RESEARCHING SCHOLARSHIPS - Searching for scholarships now can help you later when you begin applying. The Internet is one of your best sources of information, but be cautious and smart about where you search. Ask your parents or your school counselor for help when you begin your search. Scholarship searches should be FREE, so be sure to read carefully when accessing services on the Web. It’s important to note that many scholarships you might qualify for academically will also require that you have other qualifications like volunteerism, community services, or school involvement.

. . .BY RESEARCHING AND VISITING COLLEGES - Did you know that some colleges offer programs or courses that you can take on their campuses, near your home? Many of them offer concurrent enrollment where you can take a college course at the same time you are taking your high school courses. There are also Saturday and summer programs that are designed specifically for high school students. It may give you a better perspective in experiencing campus life at an early age, while helping you see yourself as a future college student. Talk to your school counselor about these opportunities.

...BY TAKING THE ACT AND SAT - Register for and take the ACT and SAT as often as possible. The scores you make should give you a good idea of what areas you’ll need to improve, and it’s good practice for these very important college entrance tests. Colleges will look at your scores to determine admittance to their campus, and you’ll be more likely to receive better scholarship opportunities with higher scores. There are free test prep resources available online. The ACT and SAT Web sites both offer free practice tests and there are other sites that focus specifically on college entrance exam preparation. Talk to your school counselor about when and where to take both tests.

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